

PREFACE

Sanatan Dharma is a philosophy of living that can be applied universally, irrespective of cultural differences. The book is a collection of articles on various topics on Sanatan Dharma or Hindu religion. The articles in this book are thought provoking and deal with the subtle realms of religion. The book deals with Hinduism and spirituality, with a rational, scientific and philosophical point of view. It clarifies the central tenets and beliefs of Hindu religion. This book will serve as a great resource to people who are interested in understanding the key concepts of spirituality and Hindu philosophy.

The writing of these articles started with a talk given by the author on one of the topics in the book, followed by additional articles and talks by the author. The book is a compilation of these talks and articles. The book begins with a treatise on the creation of the Universe, then an in depth review of spirituality and Hindu philosophy, followed by detailed description of Hindu deities and festivals. Each chapter can be read individually or sequentially. The book is written in simple, easy to understand English with some words and/or quotations in Devnagri (Hindi) script where good English translation is not available.

Since early childhood the author had a deep craving for spirituality, wanting to find the true meaning of religion. He read a lot of literature on the various religions of the World. His quest lead him to various Saints and Sages. In his youth he was initiated into the *Radhaswami* faith by Maharaj Sawan Singhji of Beas (Panjab, India). Later in life he had the good fortune of being associated with Param Dayal Pandit Faqir Chandji Maharaj of Hoshairpur (Panjab, India). Through these associations he became a lifelong practitioner of Surat Shabd Yog.

Having an extensive scientific background, the author analyzed various aspects of Hindu religion with an unbiased and logical perspective, refusing to accept things on faith or face value. The articles in the book are the result of his analysis of this great religion. The detailed explanations in each article are based on both scientific research and sound principles.

PROFILE OF AUTHOR

Shri Brij Bhushan Lal Bhatnagar was a scion of a respected *Bhatnagar* family. He was born in Panipat (Haryana) on February 21st, 1917. He was the son of **Late Dr. Brij Mohan Lal Bhatnagar** and grandson of **Sh. Bishambar Dass** of Panipat(Haryana). His mother **Smt. Chanderwati**, daughter of **Late Sh. Har Sarup Singh** of Sonepat, was very religious, charitable and spiritual.

He was an intellectual giant, with a keen mind. He *matriculated* at the very young age of 14 from *Jain High School, Panipat* (Haryana) and did *F.Sc.* from *Rohtak* (Haryana). At the age of 16 he went to *Lahore* (now in Pakistan) for higher studies. He was one of the very few people, who had the distinction of completing his post graduate in late nineteen thirties, when there were only few colleges right from Delhi to *Peshawar* (Pakistan) and higher education was not so common. He received his *B.Sc. (Hons.)* from *Forment Christian College* in 1935 and *M.Sc. (Hons.)* in 1937 (at the age of 20).

He joined *Punjab Irrigation Department* in *Lahore* as a *Research Scientist* and moved to *Amritsar* after partition. He was recognized as a leading Scientist in his field and rapidly rose to the rank of *Class I Gazetted officer*. He retired from the *Irrigation Dept.* as a *Superintending Engineer* in 1975.

On October 15th 1945 he married **Smt. Bimla Bhatnagar** of *Lahore*. She was a life long *Educationist* rising from a *High School Teacher* to retire as the *District Education Officer* from *Punjab*. She was born in June 1923 at *Rohtak*, Haryana to **Late Smt. Lashmi Devi**, daughter of **Late Sh. Durga Parshad** retired *Tehsildar*, and **Late Sh. Mukat Behari Lal** son of **Late Sh. Bal Mukand**, Assistant to a *British Bar-at-Law* at *Lahore*, Pakistan. Her mother was religious, mild mannered and pious lady. Her father was an Officer in the *Punjab Civil Secretariat, Lahore*. She was the fourth child of a forward and progressive family of seven siblings.

Shri Brij Bhushan Lal Bhatnagar was a benevolent and generous person. He shared his good fortune with anyone in need. Throughout his life he donated towards multiple charitable causes, supported children from poor families. Also, from a young age he took over the responsibility of supporting his family and relatives as needed. Early in his life he was drawn towards spirituality, he was initiated into the *Radhaswami* faith by **His Holiness, Maharaj Sawan Singhji** of *Beas*. Later in his life he was graced by **Param Dayal, Pt. Faqir Chandji Maharaj** of *Manavta Mandir, Hoshiarpur* (Punjab). Throughout his life he practiced the teachings of *Santmat*. He was an avid reader with a sharp mind, who wrote numerous articles and was well versed in the various religions of the world (and was often referred to as “Encyclopedia of knowledge”). He enjoyed discussions on various subjects. He was liberal minded and progressive in his views

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1

CREATION OF UNIVERSE

Prologue

*S*ince time immemorial, humans have been fascinated by the sun, moon and stars of the *Milky Way*. Star gazing at night caused so many questions to arise in their minds about their existence, their creation, the Creator and how it was created, also its purpose, etc. All the major religions of the world have touched these subjects about creation in their own typical ways by the prophets, *Saints* and *Seers* of that religion. All are unanimous of the view that the universe was created by some power, whom they gave different names in their own spoken language.

Origin of Universe

According to *Vedas* of *Hindus*, the universe was created by *Nad* (नाद) or the primordial sound and on that basis called *Vedas* as *Shrutis* (श्रुति). *Shruti* means that which was heard. That could be nothing but sound. In scientific terms, sound is defined as wave motion comprising sequence of pressure pulses passing through some medium. The **Bible** says:-

"In the beginning there was the word, the word was with God, and the word was God."

The word used here does not mean any alphabet or combination of alphabets to form a letter or word of any spoken language of humans, because languages are products of human intellect and in the beginning there were no humans. It really means that word which could be understood or recognized for all times to come in every part of the universe. Such a word can only be primeval sound. *Islam* believes that God uttered the word *Kun* (कृन), which means (होजा) or manifest and the universe appeared. It too, really means that a sound that was produced, was God, which is represented symbolically by that word of human language. Similarly, other religions also agree that the universe was created by sound.

Modern science also postulates that the whole of the universe appeared as a result of the Big Bang which also implies that there was an enormous explosion on account of an extremely loud sound, The *Big Bang theory* was propounded in the twentieth century AD, but a century earlier, a great Saint of Agra, India, **Swami Shiv Dayal** (1818-1878 AD) had clearly expounded that the origin of the universe not only lies in the earliest sound but also described it in broad details as to how it came into existence or manifested. Ancient Indian *Saints* and *Rishis* had also proclaimed that the universe originated from sound but no detailed description of the process of creation is found, as per my knowledge, in any scripture. **Swami Shiv Dayal's** revelations are unique and outstanding in that respect. He also defined the state of Creator before the manifestation, though Supreme Being is beyond any state, yet it was described for our comprehension. He said:

“ठनमुन रूप भद्रा पह बहता
 ठनमुन रूशा भद्रा पह बहता
 या की गति कोई नहीं जाने
 पह आपनी गति आप खाने।”

It implies that the *Eternal Energy* or *Power* was in a static potential latent state. Science has not been able to theorize about that state. He further explained that there was no creation then at that juncture. He described it as:

“बुध नहीं कुछ नहीं था औ
 आप ही आप दूसर नहीं कोई।”

It means that only the *Supreme Being* was there. Then there was a हिलोर or slight motion, or गति in that condition which saints also call मौज or *exercise of will*. Some define it as वासना or *desire of the Supreme*, simply for purpose of our understanding. That motion was like a small ripple caused in a body of water when a pebble is thrown into it. **Swami ji** further described it as:

ठनी मौज प्रगट बत ज्ञाने

then what happened:

“हैवत हैवत हैवत होई
 हैवत रूप धशा इक झोड़।”

It says a wonder of wonders then took place and that wonder adopted a form. As there are no suitable and appropriate words to explain the phenomenon, he called it simply a wonder which is beyond any description of human experience.

It is the property or characteristic of a ripple that once it is started, it goes on extending in the form of concentric ripples

until it reaches the periphery of the body of water in which it appeared. It may be noted that in the phenomenon of a ripple, water itself does not move, but only waves with crests and troughs are formed, though apparently the water appears to be moving, which is a sort of illusion. In essence, the phenomenon causes no displacement or disturbance of the water. Similarly, the Supreme Creator was not in any manner effected by the manifestation or creation or appearances of universes. It remained in the same perpetual state as before. The original slight motion took the form of a sound wave. As stated earlier, sound is defined as wave motion, comprising a sequence of pressure pulses passing through some medium. As the sound wave gained momentum through its expansion and extension it became more and more compact, denser and denser, which gave rise to extremely incredible intense pressure and enormous speed, consequently developing tremendous energy. What happened next, Swami explained as:

“धून धृथकाश डठी इक शाशी ज्ञात झुवत इचना धाशी।”

He clearly states that an unimaginable loud sound took place, which started creation. In scientific terms it is called Big Bang—a huge, mammoth explosion with incredibly loud sound.

Creation of Matter

Before that no time or space existed and it was their beginning. Sound cannot travel in a vacuum and no matter was created by then. The sound created that travel facility, which in Hindu scriptures is known as *Akash* (आकाश). There is no appropriate English word to completely convey a full sense and import of that Sanskrit word. Earlier scientists considered and termed it as ether, but later in 1887, scientists, **Dr. Albert Abraham**

Michelson, and **Dr. Edward William Morley**, experimented to prove its existence and failed. Hence the word ether, to translate *Akash*, has since been dropped and is no more in use. Space too, does not have all the qualities attributed to *Akash*, and therefore, does not impart full comprehension and sense, thus making it also inappropriate and unsuitable.

Swami ji further proclaimed that sound created light, which is a source of all life and its sustenance in the universe. According to him, from light more sounds originated which in turn threw up more light and so on. Such interaction of sound and light created matter. It is elementary science that there are five forms of energy, viz, sound, light, heat, electricity and magnetism. These five energies transformed into the so-called five elements in common parlance, which are described in Hindu scriptures as *Akash, Air, Fire, Water* and *Earth/Soil*. In fact they represent three states of matter called *gas, solidity* and *fluidity*. In actual existence, air, water and soil are either mixture or compounds, or mixtures of compounds of natural elements discovered by science. How five energies transformed or translated into five elements has been fully explained in my article on “***Genesis of Akash, Air, Fire, Water and Soil.***” These so-called five elements, by their interaction and combination, formed different forms of life on earth and in our world.

According to scientific research of the cosmos, the first form of matter was sub-atomic particles. The first one to appear was the *neutrino* which has no electrical charge; with a mass of one ten millionth of the mass of an electron, it usually passes straight through space at nearly the speed of light, without slowing and interacting with anything in its path.

Then were produced *quarks*. These are of six types. They are bound by a force termed as *gluon* which has neither electrical charge nor mass. Three quarks form a *baryon* particle. Quarks formed are the building blocks of *protons*. Each proton is composed of three quarks and has a positive charge and mass. The proton is held in the atom nucleus by strong nuclear force, enough to counteract repulsion by other protons. A free proton does not decay. The nucleus has no electrical charge, but has heavier mass than a proton. Free neutrons decay into proton, electron and neutrinos. The electron too, has mass with a negative electric charge. Its mass is 1/1836 of a proton. It has wave-like properties and is associated with weak nuclear force, It is stable against decay and revolves around the proton. Then come atoms of different elements. The number of proton and electron in an atom, which they compose, determine the element, its mass and other properties. There exists an *anti-quark* also. Each pair of quarks and anti-quarks, when held together, is called *meson*, another sub-atomic particle. They are responsible for holding proton and neutron together in an atomic nucleus. Atoms joint to form a *molecule* of a substance.

These sub-atomic particles at the time of creation, appeared as ripples or waves. In 1992, a team of scientists led by **George Smoot** an astrophysicist at *Lawrence Berkley Labs* in California, observed that extremely thin clouds or ripples represent the earliest stages of matter. The discovery was made by the *Cosmic Background Exploratory Satellite* of the *National Aeronautics and Space Agency*. The whole research was carried out with the collaboration of scientists from another nine organizations. The charged sub-atomic particles interact via the *photon*, the quantum of electromagnetic radiation. Light thought to be wave like, appears to behave like

particles. Thus, photons are considered both light particles and waves as well. It confirms what swami ji said, that a ripple was formed in the beginning. The ripples created billions of years ago immediately started emitting their radiation, which traveled at the speed of light as per observations made from the Exploratory Satellite. The smallest ripples stretches across 2.9 billion trillion miles.

In the beginning, matter was uniformly spread out in the newborn universe. Then it started to clump together in the form of clouds. In reality, to start with, there were clumps of energy which coalesced into matter about 3,000,000 years after the Big Bang. In about one millisecond, or 1/1000 of a second , after the Big Bang, the temperature briefly reached 167 billion degrees F. Clouds were formed due to tiny temperature variations of 30 millionths of a degree, representing different densities of matter in clouds and surrounding regions. Once the clouds were formed , gravity made the increasing amounts of matter clump together. These clouds were gases, mostly hydrogen, eventually creating more gases and dust, which appeared in the form of galaxies, clusters of galaxies and the super clusters. Between super clusters lie giants void that are nearly empty. The observations by the Hubble telescope suggest that when the formed galaxies collided with each other, the collision resulted in star bursts due to extreme compression, creating enormous pressure and highly intense temperature, and ultimately appearing as very, very bright light. The stars are estimated to be 12 billion years old, and there are ten billion trillion in the whole of the universe. Thus, the universe converted from amorphous to well structured. In the billions of years since then, hydrogen and helium in the Big Bang theory have been processed through stars to form other elements and

chemicals. According to the widely accepted Big Bang theory, the universe started as an infinitely hot and dense dot of energy that exploded with a dazzling brilliance and created the matter all about the universe. This corroborates the view held by our ancient *Rishis* that is explained as:

एक खुंड का अकल पक्षावा।

Electromagnetic Radiation

Just after birth of sub-atomic particles, they emitted electromagnetic radiation travelling in the form of waves or ripples, which constitute both visible and invisible parts of the spectrum. It ranges from longer waves called radio waves, to very, very short waves known as gamma rays. The shorter the wave length, the faster they move, and with more energy. Most of these radiations or waves, which differ from visible light only in energy level and wave length, are blocked by the air. Only radio waves, microwaves and light, pierce through the atmosphere and reach the ground. Thus infrared waves, ultraviolet rays, x-rays and gamma rays do not reach the earth. Ultraviolet rays are obscured by the presence of ozone in atmospheric layers. The blocking of such rays, which could prove destructive of life in this world, is a blessing. The primary colours of the white light spectrum are blue, yellow and red. The other four colours are combinations of these primary colours. The light of *Brahm*, the Creator of this world is white. *Maya* or *Shakti*, acting as a prism, dispersed the white light of *Brahm*. As it descended down, forming regions of three main subroutine-energies, the white light got divided into its three primary colors. **Shiv** or *Mahesh Lok* has blue light, the light of *Vishnu Lok* is yellow and *Brahma Lok* has a variation of red light. It is supported by the colors perceived by yogis while

meditating on different *Chakras* of their bodies as per *Patanjali Yoga* system.

If one ponders over the true nature of sub-atomic particles, which the universe is composed of, one comes to the only conclusion, that the universe and the matter present in it is nothing but an interplay of waves or ripples, which appear to be moving and expanding simultaneously when, in fact, no part of their source is really in motion. Hence, the apparent motion of the universal matter is just an illusion, though it appears to be real in our mental perception. However, so far as we are in the body and have not transacted to spiritual regions, the universe is real and *Satya* (सत्य) and has to be treated as such for all practical purposes. Therefore, our soul residing in the three concentric bodies or covers of gross, subtle and causal matter, is designated or defined as *Sachidanand* सच्चिदानन्द or सत् चित् तथा आनन्द.

Anti Matter

Scientists believe that nature has a deep and abiding symmetry in which every plus has a minus as its counterpart, such as electrical charges of electrons and protons. All the matter in the universe should, therefore, have anti-matter as its counterpart and the Big Bang could have created an equal amount of anti-matter. Like building blocks of matter viz. electrons, protons and neutrons, anti-matter particles should be exact duplicates of these except that they carry opposite electric charges. The counterpart of an electron carries a positive charge in anti-matter and is, therefore, called a positron. In theory, anti-matter atoms could combine to form anti-matter objects. So far, no evidence exists that the cosmos has clumps of anti-matter. At the same time, there is no proof that it is not out there. Recent experiments with atom smashers in the laboratory, in

which sub-atomic particles collided, creating extremely high temperatures and pressures supposed to exist at the time of the Big Bang, have produced tiny but intense fireballs of energy. These fireballs can condense into sub-atomic particles in which every electron has anti-matter electrons, every proton an anti-matter proton, and so on, which have mass and other measurable qualities as comparable particles of matter. When these matter and anti-matter particles collide, they are transformed into pure energy, mainly in the form of particles, gamma rays, and particles of light. Cosmic gamma rays can only be detected outside the earth's atmosphere by sensitive instruments. The laboratory process released all their latent energy. However, anti-matter particles lasted only a few millionths of second before they encountered their regular matter counterparts. The principle behind this creation of anti-matter particles is **Einstein's** Theory of Relativity. The big surprise came in 1979 from a balloon-borne experiment carried out at the edge of space. It discovered and recorded anti-matter itself above the earth. The astrophysicist suspected that protons forming cosmic rays created anti-matter in an equal amount. More experiments were continued. Recently, an orbiting observatory known as the Particle Astrophysics Magnet Facility, or Astromag, has detected a mysterious cloud of anti-matter particles that appears to be boiling up from the center of our galaxy, or *Milky Way*, to form a massive fountain spewing more than 17,400 trillion miles into space. Further research on anti-matter is going on.

Star and Black Holes

The Hubble telescope discovered that our own *Milky Way* galaxy has about 150 globular clusters containing 100,000 to

several million stars in each cluster. These were among the first stars to appear in the Universe formed by primeval gases 12 billion years ago. Old stars in globular clusters merge and out of their consequent gases, new stars are born. Clumps of hydrogen inside the evaporating gaseous globules called eggs eventually hatch into stars. These are formed due to giant clouds of hydrogen in smashing galaxies. Thus galaxies are not static structures. When one of the two shaped like pinwheels plunges into the heart of another the resultant galaxy will be shaped like an egg.

The phenomenon of gaseous globular clusters called eggs, and the formation of egg-shaped galaxies after inter-collisions, and mergers, calling resultant galaxies as eggs, is justified. Each galaxy, in its own right, is a universe. These observations prompted our ancient *Rishis* and astronomer seers to call or define the universe as *Brahmand* (ब्रह्मांड) or *Egg of the Brahm*, the Creator. The apparent shape of our whole visible universe is elliptical, oval or egg-like. This can also be a reason to call it *Brahmand*.

A *Black Hole*, by definition itself, cannot be seen and remains invisible. Their presence is deduced by the speed of stars revolving around it, its cannibalistic action of devouring old and slow moving stars, and other indirect and circumstantial evidence like measurement of radio waves and infrared waves emitted by them, etc. The Theory of General Relativity explained the force of gravity through the concept of curved “*space time*”, pointed out the possibility of the existence of a Black Hole. Black Holes are created by collapsing stars or structures. They continue feeding on their neighboring stars until the end of time. They are so dense, containing enormous

mass, that their gravity prevents anything, even light, from escaping once it has fallen in it. They are incredibly massive, weighing as much as about three billion stars. They are perceived to be almost stationary. The heavier a black hole is, the faster things revolve around it. The center of our galaxy is obscured by thick clouds of gas and dust, screening it from earthly telescopes. Younger stars speeding around at velocities up to 20 million miles an hour slip past a black hole but slow moving old stars are caught by its gravity and swallowed in. The Hubble telescope has found a massive black hole in every galaxy observed by it. Even our own galaxy, the Milky Way, has a black hole as its hub. Some time back, a team of astronomers, led by **Ramesh Narayan**, Associate Director of *Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics* in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A., found direct evidence of black holes. Narayan uncovered evidence that gas at temperatures over a trillion degrees— the hottest temperatures known in the universe— disappear down a black hole. It swallows nearly a hundred times as much energy as it radiates. Thus, once having fallen through this one-way portal , matter or energy is forever lost to the known universe. His findings were based on several telescopes and space craft observations and innovative computer analysis. **Richstone**'s studies reinforced the evidence uncovered by Narayan's team and added significantly to the accumulating evidence that black holes are plentiful and important players in the universe. Theorists have speculated that objects and energy that fall into a black hole, emerge elsewhere in the universe, or perhaps in other universes.

In the summer of 1978, when the possible existence of black holes was announced in papers, a great *Saint* from *Hoshiarpur*, Punjab, India, named **Pt. Faqir Chand** (1886-1981 A.D.)

happened to visit my elder son, **Sudhir Bhatnagar** in *San Jose*, California, USA. I told him about the new discovery of black holes. He instantly, without a second thought, remarked that it is *Maha Shunya* region of spiritual zone which is the seat of Universal Mind; the supporting Energy or Force controlling all the universes and regions below it. It is the casual zone where the seed of all of the Creation or Manifestation resides or is based, causing it to appear. As stated in the former paragraph, scientists suspect that probably black holes are the conduits of creation of new galaxies in this universe or some other universe. The theory is confirmation of what **Pandit Faqir Chand** said. There are tens of millions of galaxies as established by science. Our sages of yore also proclaimed that creation constitutes crores and crores (multi-million) of Brahmands in saying कोटान् कोट व'स्माद्. Thus the wisdom and expositions of Indian Hindu Saints and Mahrishis are now being confirmed by the modern scientific experiments and astrophysical observations.

Age of the Universe

Hindu ancient astronomers and mathematicians had estimated and calculated the age of the universe. According to their calculations as given in the astronomical literature and astrological almanacs and texts a *Satyug* (सत्युग) lasts for 17,28000 years, *Tretayug* (त्रेतायुग) has a duration of 12,96000 years, *Dwaparyug* (द्वापरयुग) has a life of 86,4000 years, whereas *Kalyug* (कलयुग) or the present era shall consist of 4,32000 years. A cycle of these four *Yugs* makes a *Maha Yug*. 71 such cycles of Maha Yugs compose one **Manu** (मनु) and 14 Manus shall form one day of *Brahma*, the Creative Power or sub-energy of the Creator. After one day

of *Brahma*, there comes dissolution or merger of our world. After a lapse of one night of *Brahma*, when there is no process of creation; the world is again created or manifested. One day of Brahma totals to 17.716 billions years of earth. Innumerable cycles of manifestation and dissolution have occurred. How many of these cycles have passed, no human has ever known nor none (including Saints of the highest order) shall know in the future. The present cycle of manifestation is yet to continue for billions of years more.

Modern cosmologists, astrophysicists and mathematicians have also tried to estimate the age of the present universe. As their calculations are based on many factors, the estimates vary. Formerly, it was 15 billion years, but recent Hubble telescope observations have scaled it down to 13.6 billion years. Yet none is certain, and further changes in calculations are possible and may turn out to be nearly the same as estimated by Hindu astrophysicists with regard to one day of Brahma.

Dissolution or Merger of the Universe

Dissolution, merger, disappearance or destruction of the Universe has been an intriguing and most interesting subject, linked with the age of the modern universe, the subject of theorization, observation, postulations and studies of the modern science of cosmology. The studies have shown that the universe is expanding. Common sense dictates that the universe is extending into empty space, but that idea is wrong. Instead, the universe is, therefore, getting bigger and galaxies are going far apart.

The most important conclusion, however, is that the universe has not been around forever and it had a beginning,

said scientist **Lineweaver** of the *University of South Wales*, Sydney, Australia. Astronomers have hypothesized that for about a million years after the Big Bang, when the universe was just beginning to expand, the matter was so dense that, if there was light, it could not travel very far before being absorbed. Another scientist, **Margon**, say it is believed it took several million years for stars to form and without stars, there was no light to be seen. Light travels in a vacuum about 5.8 trillion miles in one year and the distance so covered is termed light years.

Combined with other new observations, it is suggested that the universe may not actually end. It may simply expand forever, becoming an even colder, darker and more attenuated void. But this is against common knowledge of all the things in this world since time immemorial. Anything which is born or created or has a beginning, always has a certain life span, after which it decays, collapses, dies or is destroyed. How this unsparing Law of Nature will cease to apply in the case of the universe, does not appeal to logic and is not supported by actual observations of all physical bodies in this world since its beginning. Anything which has a beginning must have an end.

Other investigations about the death of stars and ultimate future fiery demise of our earth, have contradicted the view held by some that the universe may never end. Stars throughout their lives fight a losing battle against their tendency to collapse under their own weight. Against that gravity is balancing the energy given off by fusion reactions going on within them, in which lighter atoms get together to form heavier atoms. Without that energy a star would collapse. Without gravity, it would explode.

Young stars are mostly hydrogen. While hydrogen gas gets used up, the heavier elements formed in the process, act as a fuel for further reactions, producing yet more heavier elements. Ultimately, iron is formed in the core of stars and the nuclear reaction stops. As iron accumulates, the relentless weight of the star becomes too much for the core to bear and its atoms collapse. The orbiting electrons are squeezed into atomic nuclei, where they convert protons into neutrons. As a result, the massive iron core implodes to form a neutron star which contains nothing but neutrons. Ultimately monstrous waves of neutrinos burst out of the star, then called a supernova. Neutrinos account for 99% of all the energy a collapsed star emits. The electromagnetic radiation is given out in various wavelengths, viz. radiowaves, microwaves, infrared rays, visible and ultraviolet light, x-rays and gamma rays. At that time, the supernova shines 250 million times brighter than the sun. During the core collapse, a shock wave, while heating and pressurizing all the layers through which it passes, throw out huge amounts of star stuff, many times the mass of the sun, into space, which again starts a new round of fusion. During the time of its gradual decay, the supernova gives out high energy gamma ray radiation. As a result of the stars death in the long run, the whole of the galaxy should also collapse or die. It applies in the case of all the galaxies, though it shall happen in trillion of years.

After having burned up all its fuel, but before collapse or death, a star, like the sun, will expand, becoming a red giant in about five billion years. Earth may actually be inside the expanded sun's tenuous outer reaches. The Earth then shall be in the puddle of matter at 100 million degrees F. temperature because of the internal heating of the cloud. In due course, the

dying sun will spill out the matter at the speed of nearly five million miles per hour and it shall collapse, containing the same mass but compressed to the size of the Earth.

In Hindu scriptures, *Sanskrit* words *Pralaya* (प्रलय) and *Maha Pralaya* (महाप्रलय), are used, which literally mean merger and greater merger respectively in something beyond. As regards merger or dissolution, **Swami Ji**, has described the process of destruction of universe in the following verses:

“पृथ्वी घोली जल ने आय जल को झो बबा आठिन आय
 आगनी मिली पर्यन के रूप पर्यन हुई आकाश रक्षण
 आकाश रक्षण माया माहिं तम एपा ढीखे कुछ नाहिं रूप
 माया मिली अहम मेंजाय।”

The scientific destruction stops with the throwing of star stuff into space. Here space may euphemistically be considered as *Akash* though it is a very poor English translation of the Sanskrit word. **Swami ji** goes even further. According to him, *Akash* merges into *Maya*, which is pitch dark, and *Maya* in turn, merges into *Brahm* the creator of Universe. Science is silent about *Maya* and *Brahm* about whom no theory has been advanced so far. Science has been unable to resolve and reconcile about the existence of *Maya* and *Brahm* before the appearance or manifestation of the universe, both visible and invisible. Although science presumes that with star stuff thrown out into space, a new round of fusion or creation will be started in other universe by the matter gulped by black holes. As per Saints of *Hindus*, the world would start manifesting again after a certain pause or gap of inactivity during one night of *Brahma* (ब्रह्मा).

Swami ji also stipulated that all the galaxies, both visible and invisible, for that matter all the visible and invisible universes shall merge into their original source, but that happens less frequently and after a very, very long time. He says:

शंख गुफा महा सून का आक्ष यहाँ तक प्रलय कशी कशी होई।

The ancient wise sages, astronomers and mathematician of *Hindus*, have estimated that *Maha Pralaya* or Greater Dissolution or Merger would happen when 100 years of life of Universal Brahma are completed, which is approximately 15.46 trillion years, of earth while modern cosmologists, astrophysicists and mathematicians are still struggling with the question of whether the ever expanding universe shall end at some point of time or not.

Gravity

Scientists have almost an unanimous view that gravity is the cause of decay and eventual death of stars, supernovas, quasars, etc. Far beyond the Milky Way, they have detected an incredibly powerful source of gravity deep in the space that appears to defy conventional explanation. They discussed the topic of gravity, its source and related issues in a meeting of *American Physical Society* in Washington, DC, in May 1986. They call invisible, massive source of gravity as gravitational lenses. This force of gravity is much more powerful than the most massive clusters of galaxies combined. According to their postulations, the primordial condition was of extreme concentration and uniformity. It was without atomic particles and lacked diverse laws that now govern their behavior. It was later

than the matter and physical laws took on their present form. It was then more or less a vacuum. Gravitational energy contains no matter. This scientific view of a primordial vacuum and absence of matter in gravitational energy confirms in a way the existence of *Maha Sunn* or *Maha Shunya Zone* of spiritual regions which is the seat of Universal Mind or *Par Brahman* (पर ब्रह्म) of Hindu Spiritual Philosophy, where the casual 1 seed of universes, both visible and invisible, lies.

The gravity is so powerful a force that it bends even light. The sun a great source of gravity has been shown to bend light. This was predicted by *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*. As much as 99 percent of the universe is believed to consist of “*dark matter*”— invisible material whose composition is unknown. **Dr. Leonid Ozeroy** of *Harvard Smithsonian Center*, which has mapped parts of the cosmos in three dimensions, said that galaxies crowded in spaces, form only 10 percent of the universe. The remaining 90 percent is almost empty, forming voids, some of which are more than 100 million light years wide. In 1982, it was discovered that the Milky Way and its neighbors were moving together relative to the entire universe. It is attributed to a recent discovery in 1987, of a mysterious cluster, which they call “*Great Attractor*”, an incredibly immense source of gravity. Thus, they are moving in concert rather than flying apart.

Leave the scientific view aside. Gravitation is a sort of attraction; the force or energy which attracts objects towards one another and hold them together, preventing their flying off or falling apart. Gravity has two components. Centripetal force and Centrifugal force. These are two sides of the same coin. These forces are causes of attraction and repulsion even in

sub-atomic particles such as gluon, nuclear forces, electric charges, etc. Like and dislike, love and hate, friendship and enmity are different faces of the same force. At the time of creation or manifestation, the centrifugal force came into action when a part of the eternal potential energy converted into kinetic ones, converting infinitesimal part of latent potent energy into dynamic kinetic energy resulting into break of that one small drop of the supreme vast and enormous reservoir of energy into unaccountable, extremely small and insignificant sub-atomic particles. As the function of that force happened to split, whatever was there, it came to be termed as negative force as represented by negative charge of sub-atomic particles. All the rest of the reservoir of latent energy was trillion trillion times (just to comprehend its enormity) more powerful than the splitted one; it exerted much more centripetal force of gravitation which did not allow split sub-atomic particles to break altogether loose and fly away from its central source. It resulted in rotation or revolution of negatively charged subparticles around the remaining mass. The same phenomenon is occurring in case of all other larger bodies of universes even in the cluster of galaxies. As the attracting force grows stronger and stronger, all sorts of bodies come closer and closer, collide, annihilate or merge into each other. So gravity can also be called a source and force of destruction or cause of merger or dissolution. In due course, they all shall have to merge in their eternal source of origin, which is called *Maha Pralaya* in *Hindu* scriptures, or final dissolution. The cycle of gravity goes on and on endlessly. God or Supreme Being is considered to be all love and gravity in the physical aspect of that, who aspect of that, who is otherwise formless and stateless. The physical aspect is termed as *Maya* because gravity has no matter and can only be felt.

Epilogue

In 1923, French physicist, **Louis de Broglie**, suggested that matter particles may in turn behave like waves. It was later confirmed in 1926 and 1927 that particles such as electrons were no longer considered as point like objects, but are spread out in a way governed by wave functions. When an electron in an excited atom jumps from one possible energy state to another of lower energy, a quantum of light is emitted. It can be seen in the laboratory that the electron behaves both as a particle and as a wave. Electromagnetic radiation is emitted also by objects on account for their temperature. Austrian physicist, **Erwin Schrodinger** devised the expression for the behavior of matter as waves.

In 1964 an Irish physicist, **Dr. John Steward Bell**, offered a mathematical theorem that “*Reality*” must be non-local or pervasive. **Dr. Nick Herbert** in his book, “*Quantum Reality; Beyond the New Physics*”, explains that the universe seems to contain something that travels faster than light which simply means that time is an illusion. He concludes that if time is just another dimension, according to *Einstein’s theory of Relativity*, then the entire history of the universe from the beginning to the end is spread along this timeline and that the past still exists and so does the future. As such, he further says that our human perception of an eternal present, which seems to travel in the future direction, is an illusion. This shows that even moderns scientists are prone to the views held by ancient spiritual leaders of *Hindus*, that time as well as this world is an illusion or *Maya* in *Sanskrit*.

From the scientific research described in the foregoing, it is clear that everything in this world is, in reality, composed of

waves i.e. and extension of the primeval wave, which caused creation or manifestation as per lucid description by **Swami Ji** of *Agra*, a century or more earlier.



2

GENESIS OF AKASH, AIR, FIRE, WATER AND SOIL

Every human being is aware of five powerful elements of nature, which not only created life in different forms and shapes but also sustain it. They are commonly known as *Akash*, *Air*, *Fire*, *Water*, and *Soil*. There is no equivalent of Sanskrit word *Akash* (आकाश) in English language. Therefore, it shall be retained and used as such in this article.

According to science and also as a matter of fact it is a misnomer to describe *Akash*, *Air*, *Fire*, *Water* and *Soil* as elements in the strict sense of term. In reality they are building blocks of physical universe and are either chemical compounds or mixture of chemical compounds of real elements in scientific terminology. Every body can not comprehend science terminology. Hence some commonly recognized words had to be coined to make them comprehensible and, therefore, acceptable to public at large. So instead of calling them as elementary building blocks the term element was employed to describe them for general use.

How these so called elements came into existence, one has to go the origin of creation as explained by ancient *Rishis*, *Saints* and *Sages*. Vedas the oldest scriptures in the world are designated as *Shruti* (श्रुति) which means what was heard. Thus eternal knowledge or wisdom, which Sanskrit word *Ved* literally means came to human beings through hearing. What was heard is not any language but universal sound called *Nad* (नाद) in *Vedas*.

There are two types of sound, one in which we hear with the help of our external ears and the other is the original sound, which is heard internally by closing external ears and that which pervades through whole of human body. External sound cannot and does not provide whole of knowledge contained in the *Vedas*.

Thus, it was the internal sound heard by *Rishis* and *Maharishis*, which conveyed that wisdom. The wisdom was described in spoken words by those *Saints* and *Sages*, which was later consolidated and given the name *Vedas*.

All the religions of the world are unanimous on one basic fact that all creation manifested from Eternal Primordial original sound. In other words God manifests in the form of sound at the time of initiation of whole creation. Saints like **Kabir** and other earlier ones have described the genesis of creation but **Swami Shiv Dayal** of Agra, UP, India (1818-1878) have elucidated in more detail the process of creation of the universe.

According to him in the beginning there was absolutely no manifestation of the Supreme Being. He says, “कुछ नहीं कुछ नहीं था सू”। It means there was no creation. But “HE” was there. In what condition? He describes it as: “उन मुन रूप सदा वह रहता उन मुन दशा वह बरता”। It was a state of static potential energy or power.

The word state has been used to make it understand otherwise the Supreme Being is beyond any state or condition. “*Then a wonder; wonder, wonder happened*”, as per **Swami ji’s** version –हेरत हेरत होइ हेरत रूप धरा इक सोइ- and eternal primordial sound appeared, thereby meaning that some insignificant and infinitesimal fraction of that energy expressed itself or converted into kinetic energy or dynamic energy i.e. sound. A saint has said that it is the extension of one drop of ocean of reality. From this original sound the original light manifested, with further interactions of sound and light other energies manifested which helped in the creation of all visible and invisible universes, galaxies, stars, planets etc. How the saints learnt and realized that process of creation without physical experiments of science lies in the realm of spirituality.

Recent scientific research and studies have shown that billions of hidden and invisible galaxies and universes do exist, which confirms the findings of our saints and which they have been proclaiming all along. (કોટન કોટિ વરહમન્ડ).

Present day science has also corroborated and confirmed that sound is the source of all creation. In the twentieth century AD i.e. about hundred years after **Swami Shiv Dayal** expounded his vision, the astronomers, mathematicians, astrophysicists, cosmologists and other scientists came to an agreed conclusion that the universe started with a loud bang. Describing creation he said, ધૂસ ધદકાર ઉઠી એક ભારી। This is quite explicit and easy to understand. The big bang theory of the creation is now universally accepted. That very very extreme loud sounding causing pressure waves of extremely high frequency resulted in million of degrees of Celsius temperatures with simultaneous appearance of light of extremely high density. Science has also proved that light consist of photons,

which are particulates of matter. A few months back scientist have produced a few atomic particle artificially in the laboratory by the interaction of highly concentrated laser beam of high intensity with that of light. This further provides evidence that light is the source of matter of which universe is composed.

None denies that matter constitutes universe. Under very very high temperatures of a billion degree F or so and extreme pressure, the atoms combined to form molecules of different elements in their gaseous state. As the temperature gradually cooled down molecules further combined to form various compounds. The first of the gases formed was hydrogen atoms gave out enormous nuclear energy resulting also in the formation of helium and isotope of hydrogen in the shinning hot stars called suns. Hydrogen gas and oxygen gas, which formed later than hydrogen, combined to form water. Other heavier elements i.e. after millions of years of cooling process, also appeared. Their interactions gave rise to innumerable chemical compounds which coalesced to exist in the form a of soil and rocks.

The use of the term like air, water and soil had been adopted for making common people to understand the phenomenon of creation. In reality it means three states of all the compounds, elements or matter i.e. gaseous, liquidity and solidity . The term fire actually means heat. With required temperatures and pressures each state of matter can be transformed from one to the other.

All the subtle things can be perceived/realized easily only when they acquire gross physical bodies. Even soul can be identified when in a body. Man's identification or recognition comes only through the body. Light can be or is identified as stars, suns,

moons, lightning, lamps, candle, electric appliances etc. only through physical body. Water is identified as oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, springs, clouds, tanks, ponds, and other water bodies. Similarly, identification of other subtle energies is also through physical bodies of gross matter they assume. In order to gross mentally always essence of a thing is identified with the body it resides in. It is universally accepted practice. This approach has to be kept in mind while examining the phenomenon of transformation of energies into so called elements.

As a matter of fact the energies designated as heat and light are very much intermixed and intermingle proving it extremely difficult to practically draw a clear boundary line between the two. But as light is the source of matter it is considered separate from heat. Heat can transform the state of matter but itself can not result in the formation of matter. At the time of creation both light and heat must have manifested almost simultaneously with very insignificant time lag, may be in milliseconds, in practical terms. This is my personal understanding of the two energies.

All type of energies such as sound, light, heat, radiation, magnetic, x-rays, gamma rays including radio and television transmission etc. travel in vibrations or waves at different frequencies and various wave lengths. It is known that sound waves have no mobility in vacuum. Sound waves can pass through or move in all the three states of matter or can travel through them (states). So sound must have some medium to move for the purpose of appearance and manifestation. Therefore, existence of such a medium is presumed and our saint have described it as *Akash*, which has been impossible to be defined fully and completely understand, so far in terms of our present knowledge. Some have defined it as space and some

others as gravitation, but both fall short of correct description. The term ether has now been discarded. It is something beyond the three states of matter, described above, because matter did not exist when eternal sound first originated. *Akash* encompasses and contains everything existing in the universes and also acts as a medium for the sound energy – the creator of all universes both visible and invisible. Thus, sound is the perceived and in physical body as *Akash*.

Even on our Earth, the Sun – by means of its light and heat radiations– generate and supports all forms of life right from algae, moss, other vegetation, trees, insects, birds, reptiles, animals etc. to human beings. Without Sun all will be devoid of life. The light rays promote the process of photosynthesis in the manufacture of food by plants, trees and all vegetation. These are eaten by all living beings. The food eaten converts into fertility chemicals by metabolism of the body, which in turn becomes cause of reproduction of all physical life in all the different species. Thus, light is the source of all life on our planet.

In living beings *Pran* or life force is nothing but air in crude term accompanied by some heat due to contact with the body. We can exist for some days or weeks without solid or liquid diet, including water; but to live without breathing air, is possible for some minutes only. The obvious deduction is that the light, source of life, transmitted by the Sun has transformed into *Pran* or life force in the form of air, which in itself is gross physical matter.

The transformation of heat into fire at high temperature requires no extra intelligence to understand the phenomenon.

Electricity is of two kinds, viz static and kinetic or flowing current. Every electron and proton has electrical charge but

for practical application of static energy or to do work it must be converted into kinetic form. **Hugh Christian** of NASA (*National Aeronautical and Space Administration*) Global Hydrology observed – *“It is the movement and collision of the particles within a cloud-generally tiny bits of ice-that are believed to generate the electrical charges that turn into lightning. Updrafts and gravity separate the charged particles, as negative ones sink to the bottom of the cloud and positive ones rise to the top. This creates enormous electrical potential within the clouds and between clouds and the ground that can suddenly discharge as lightning.”* Every one sees this phenomenon in rain clouds where eletric bolt having hundreds of thousands of volts is produced in the form of lightning and thunder with potential of devastating power. The energy or electric charge was present in atoms of hydrogen and oxygen but it transformed into magnificant power when they formed a compound known as water molecules in the form of ice bits. So it is justified to say that electricity translated into water or to theorize that water is the physical body of electricity. In ancient times the later methods of production of electric current were not known and the earliest kinetic and most visible form of electric energy recognized was only lightning hence its translation into water. Also according to science, atoms are always in a state of motion or agitation due to electrical charge. One can say they are always flowing. Flow is a characteristic of liquidity which in common parlance is called water. Flow does not necessarily have to be linear or one directional. It can be multi-directional, circular, spiral, and of any geometrical configuration.

Magnetism as understood by common folk is sort of attraction. It is normally the property of solid particles. This property is,

therefore, identified with solid state i.e. its physical body. In simple language it is not far fetched to say that magnetism translated into soil. Rocks are solidified soil. Electricity and magnetism are as much interlinked as heat and light are. By the spinning of the magnets electric current is produced. Wherever there is electricity the magnetic field can be experienced. They are interlined because of consecutive states of matter.

I have not come across an explanation by a saint or a sage of transformation or translation of five primeval energies into five building blocks of gross physical universe. I do not know if it exists in any scripture, religious or spiritual document. The books and saints simply say the five energies have been translated into five so called elements. The explanation given above is mine. My attempt has been to be convincing by keeping within confines of reason. Therefore, I do not claim it to be perfect and final. Some body may be able to give a better and far more convincing explanation. Nobody can say what was actually in the minds of Rishis and Saints of yore about these five elements or their transformation from five energies. Nor it can be surmised in the absence of any relevant explanation. In previous time simple minded public accepted it as a matter of good faith the utterances or statements of then saints and wise men. Perhaps due to prevalence of faith in the *Rishis* and *Maharishis*, they did not feel the necessity of any explanation at all. The absence of such an explanation does not, however, preclude or imply that they had none. From the over all examination of the issues it will not be incorrect to infer that they were very-very nearer to the truth for all practical purposes.



3

DHARMA

*W*hat is *Dharma* (धर्म)? Since time immemorial when humans started to live in groups and started thinking rationally, they were confronted with different kinds of problems created by natural elements, basic demands of food and shelter and social living. They wanted to live harmoniously, happily and peacefully. After great thought and mutual deliberations over a long period of time the better intellectuals and wiser persons created, devised and established certain principles of living in this world in pursuit of above three objectives. These principles of living or code of conduct adopted by them came to be known as *Dharma*. The source of the word *Dharma* is Sanskrit word *Dhri* (ध्रि). The Sanskrit word *Dharma* is such that there exists no other equivalent word in any language of the world, which can fully and comprehensively convey the entire sense and import once of the word *Dharma*. It can vaguely and partially be translated as the word religion in English. It implies धर्मात् धर्म (*Dharnaat Dharma*) which really adopts every body i.e. which unites and joins every person with others like a thread of a rosary, in which every bead participates equally and is of equal importance devoid of any superiority or inferiority. In fact there is only one

universal *Dharma* or code of conduct or principle of living for all the humanity for all times to come for leading a happy life in this world, which fits that definition and is, therefore, called सनातन धर्म (*Sanatan Dharma*) and does not belong to any particular country, region, groups of people, class, clan, sect, tribe, or any other classification.

Later on after the establishment of a social order and civilized community several questions arose in the minds of Thinkers and Philosophers. These were:

- Who created or what is the source of all the elements and forces of Nature.
- What is our relation with them and rest of the visible universe.
- What is our relation with the source or Creator of the universe.
- Who are we?
- Where from have we come and where person goes after death.
- What is that leaves the body at the time of death, etc.

These questions and their probably intellectual answers produced another stream of thought, principles and observed laws. This was termed as *Adhyatam* or spirituality or science of soul. Most of the religions of the world in the present form have mixed up both the streams and now deal with both the aspects of life. However, it is somewhat separate in Hindu religion only. Thus, *Dharma* can be classified into two kinds. One is social, moral, ethical and institutional and the second is only spiritual. For the sake of understanding one can call the former

Institutional, which varies from one social structure to another. Most of the humanity follows the institutional religion in one form or the other. It differs in action, devotion and knowledge from one region to another, one country to another country, one nation or ethnic group to another. It can also be termed more or less as a ritualistic tendency of a group or groups of people, caste, sub-caste, faiths, sects, communities or a nation as a whole.

The foundation of every religion is based on two fundamentals. One basic principle is to provide bodily comforts and peace of mind while the other is to remove doubts, wrong notions and ignorance of human beings. In reality if we go deeper and think rationally, then institutional religion is nothing but a conglomerate bundle of some fine thoughts, rituals, rites and customs. No child is born with any religion. His environments, upbringing and also circumstances of birth, parentage, social standing etc. mould him in a particular line and school of thought resulting in his development as a follower of certain code of conduct, ethics, social practices and religion. The Architects of above stated two fundamentals had kept place, time, climate, season, and individual in mind while framing the structure of a particular religion. With the passage of time the later seers, thinkers, sages and philosophers made amendments suitable for their times which caused appearance of varied forms of each religion. Hence, we can now perceive many sects and cults in all the religions of the world.

The present civilization all over the globe finds solace, consolation, amelioration and re-assurance in external action covering various rituals, ceremonies and rites. It includes multifarious devotional practices in temples, churches, mosque, gurudwaras, synagogues, maths, sanghs, fire temples and other

holy and sacred places like shrines, places of pilgrims etc. The devotees of different religions follow different types of pursuits of knowledge including reading of holy books, mass congregations where sermons are delivered, study of biographies of *Saints, Sages, Avatars* and *Prophets* etc.

One of its aspects is to obey and follow laws of unity to achieve collective success in their objectives and missions through preaching and conversion to one's own religion. A community mostly tries to help its own community or religious followers. The institutional religion believes in material growth, life of ease and comfort. It cares more for personal status, name, fame, and self importance through all charitable and philanthropic acts such as building of places of worship, schools, hospitals, orphanages, destitute homes, community centers etc. These are all good deeds and necessary to keep harmony and peace in society, but those are all motivated by a thought of self-directly or indirectly.

The institutional or sectarian religion is change-able with time, place, individual and circumstances as stated in the forging. *Hindu* religion also says so. It does not remain constant under all conditions and environment because nothing in this world is constant and static. Only CHANGE is constant in the whole of the universe. According to our scriptures all castes e.g. *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishs* and *Shudras*, have different *Dharma*. An individual has also to pursue different *Dharma* in four *Ashramas* or stages or phases of life as ordained by *Sage Adi Manu* i.e. *Brahmcharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य) or studentship or stage of learning, Householder *Grahastha* (गृहस्थ), *Vanprastha* and *Sanyasa*. All of them have to follow different codes of conduct for living at those stages per force of conditions obtained in those stages or phases. Their duties, actions, thoughts and

behavior can never be same. Even food habits and daily routine, change and differ. Similarly, laws of living, procedures and methods to be observed in cold and hot regions of the world and for that matter even during different seasons and climate can not conform and be the same. They remain wide apart and need suitable amendments and adjustments to lead a comfortable life free of disease and shortages of the necessities of life.

The institutional religion, though a blessing, yet hidden in it are seeds of bickering, disputes, racial jealousies, hatred for other religions and faiths and also prejudicial behavior against other human beings, who do not follow their own religion or creed. The main reason of difference of opinion and conflict about religion is due to the fact that people are devoid of real meaning and understanding of principles of religion. A real conflict arises when the needs of changing times are not allowed to be reflected by the vested interests of established seats of religious authorities. The more a religion gets organized and religious hierarchies get entrenched, the more difficult it becomes to bring about changes, which are the crying demands of the time, because it adversely effects the interests of those, who are in command. The main cause is the accepted books of different religions, which refuse to entertain any changes in their pattern of thinking, contemplation and reflection. The minds have become closed and incapable of receiving new ideas and concepts dictated by changing times and contemporary intellect and intelligence. They believe that nothing can be imagined beyond old wisdom and knowledge as laid down in their age old books even if that wisdom had become obsolete and rusty. The failure to acknowledge the change causes the downfall of societies or communities which practice such religions that cease to be progressive.

All this betrays the real religion and becomes opposite of what is universal, uniting, harmonious and peaceful. The motto of *Sanatan Dharma* from the very beginning is ‘Universal brotherhood’. True *Dharma* is one but methods of worship or self realization can be and are different, reaching the same goal. An ancient *Rishi* of *Sanatan Dharam* has said that TRUTH is one but Seers and Sages have described it in many ways. However, modern science and technology has broken some barriers of religious prejudice and sectarianism. Many ancient and old ideas, dogmatic assertions and several other beliefs as propounded by institutional religions now stand exposed and create doubts and misgivings about their standing as eternal truths. Citing of testimony of books of dogmatic religions as well as rituals, rites and practices mentioned there in do not appear perfect under microscopes of scrutiny and re-evaluation in the light of explosion of scientific research and also advancement of intellect. Even a child now does not accept any idea, which does not appeal to his or her intellect. It has, therefore, become imperative to select, and accept only that much out of all religious books of different religions, which can conform and prove useful according to the requirements and exigencies of the present times. Every thing given in those books can not be indiscriminately taken for granted as a solid proof particularly when those fall short on the scale of human standards and values.

The *Adhyatam* or *Atmic* (spiritual) *Dharma* does not accept institutional religion in toto. It does not seek material prosperity, possessions, domination and worldly aggrandizement. It tries to attain only peace of both mind and spirit. It is called *Nivirthy Marg* by saints and sages. The *Nivirthy Marg* gives real happiness, contentment and freedom from all shackles of desire, which is the cause of all worldly bonds, and ultimate

redemption or salvation. It teaches that all actions should be performed as duty with compassion and love toward all whom we come in contact with, expecting nothing in return. One does not have to run away from life but act, while passing life as any other human being having no attachment. That is True *Dharma*. Once a reporter asked **Gandhi ji** “Are you a Hindu?” He replied “*I am a Sanatani Hindu.*” The reporter was perplexed. Perhaps he was under a misconception that a secular person like Gandhi Ji could not be a religious Hindu. Sensing his confusion Gandhi Ji further clarified, “*I am a true Hindu. Therefore, I am true Muslim and a true Christian.*” He expressed the truth that, who is good, pure and pious, can only be truly religious person and only he can claim to be true follower of a particular religion. It should be firmly believed that irreligiousness is not secularism. *Hinduism* or *Sanatan Dharma* has not only been secular in principle but it has always actually practiced it throughout the ages. *Hindus*, even when in power, never persecuted any person or community on account of any religion or faith. Jews have been persecuted throughout history in every country except India. Persians, the followers of **Prophet Zorastar**, who worship fire as a symbol of God, were persecuted in their own Iran and had to flee out of there, found shelter and safety of life and religion in India more than a thousand years ago.

India is a world in miniature. All types of diversities, which are existing in the world, are found in India also. Its diversity is its strength. This strength shall mould into unity of humanity, the realization of which would dawn on the whole world, spreading the message of *Sanatan Dharma* i.e. in other words Humanism. Ancient *Rishis* said that to be born in India is a special boon of GOD. Unity of mankind, world peace,

international cooperation and brotherhood has been mission of Hinduism, its culture and civilization. India had been great not because of its vastness in area, geography or history but because of the appearance of great souls and spiritual preceptors from time to time. It is the duty of all Indians in general and *Hindus* in particular, wherever they happen to be, to make sincere, continuous efforts to keep the banner of *Sanatan Dharma* aloft providing inspiration and guidance to the world.

By nature every human being wishes to be free of sufferings of all kinds, ignorance and death. The real object of all types of progress is nothing beyond it and *Dharma* was also devised as an instrument and vehicle of such progress. Thus, to sum up the true and most important functions of *Dharma* is achievement of happiness, acquisition of knowledge and attainment of liberation from cycles of birth and rebirth or eternal salvation. Every body's *Dharma* should prove helpful in the fulfillment of these goals.



4

SANATAN DHARMA OR VEDIC DHARMA

*S*anatan Dharma and Vedic Dharma are the two names of the same religious philosophy and principles of living or fundamental conduct of life on this earth since time immemorial and applied universally irrespective of cultural differences from one region to another observed in daily life. Its appeal and application is eternal. Hence, the name *Sanatan Dharma*. As it is based on eternal truths expounded in *Vedas*, it is called *Vedic Dharma* also. It is supposed to have been propounded by the creator or god himself. It is not the monopoly of any one Branch or sect. *Hinduism* has no single founder unlike other religions of the world. Its non-human origin is its uniqueness. It is most ancient and loftiest religion.

Max Muller, the great world renowned and respected French philosopher, though a Christian, said that *Hinduism* is not a religion but a way of life, rather a civilization.

Gandhiji has said:

"Hinduism is a huge ancient Banyan tree, whose branches go so deep in earth that with the passing of time it becomes difficult to distinguish between the branches and the root."

Hindus are both Monotheists and Pantheist at the same time. *Hinduism* is a big tent under which all sorts of diversities in human thought including Atheism has a place and all are considered *Hindus*. Tolerance for dissidence and unity in diversity are its strengths. The six sutras or schools of thought enunciated by our ancient *Rishis* viz. *Nayaya* of **Gautam**, *Sankhya* of **Kapil**, *Visreshika* of **Kanad**, *Yog* of **Patanjli**, *Purav Mimansa* of **Jainni** and *Brahma Sutra* or *Uttar Mimansa* of **Ved Vyas**, are living and everlasting examples of broadness, depth and all embracing qualities of *Hinduism*. All kinds of diverse thoughts and philosophies are existing side by side in *Hinduism*. No other religion has breadth of vision and freedom of thought comparable to Hindu religion. Other religions keep the minds closed of their followers, blind faith is preached and reason as well as logic have virtually no place in discussions about them. They have no scope for further development and new ideas in modern age of science and new research.

Our religion teaches and encourages unity and strifes are discouraged though constructive criticism is tolerated. Numerous Mats or sects (मत-मतान्तर) with diversified opinions have been coexisting for centuries without venomous attacks with cantankerousness causing and inflicting cankerous wounds. Unfortunately *Arya Samaj*, which was created to reform then prevailing socio-religious evils, caused dare to moth eaten customs and traditions and other shortcomings as well as to check further degeneration in Hindu society; has

given up the constructive role of purging such ailments such as dowry, bride burning, exploitation of socially and economically backward classes of *Hindus*, conversions to Christianity and Islam and other dehumanizing ailments and has somehow, though erroneously, adopted the destructive and undesirable course of attacking *Sanatan Dharma* wholesale. That was never the intention of **Swami Dayanand Saraswati**, the founder of *Arya Samaj*. He never embraced a criticism for the sake of criticism. His preachings were to counter non-Hindi religious attacks, their unbridled mass conversion of *Hindus*, wrong religious propaganda against *Hinduism*, which had taken hold of ignorant Hindu masses of the time due to negligence and callousness of so called religious leaders and monks. The rise of *Arya Samaj* was another link in the chain of reforms initiated by **Guru Nanak** and continued by his successors, creation of *Brahmo Samaj* in Bengal along with reforms advocated by **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** such as abolition of ritual of sati, opposition to misuse of caste system, restart of widow remarriage, particularly of child girls and young women, stoppage of child marriage, and education of girls and women, which were kept illiterate intentionally, though constituted half of the Hindu population.

Arya Samaj succeeded enormously in those regions of India, where onslaught on *Hindus* was most severe and intense. There *Hindus* were *Hindus* in name only and had forgotten about their own religion. *Arya Samaj* relifted them. Hindu had lost their moorings and were ignorant about basic values and fundamentals of *Hinduism*, so much so that they had not only opted for dress and food habits, and language of *Muslims* and *Christians*, but they had also adopted their culture and even their way of worship as well as their rituals.

Swami Dayanand was born in Gujarat, India in an orthodox *Sanatanist Hindu Family* in 1823 A.D. His original name was **Mool Shankar** as his parents ardently worshipped **Shiv**. One *Shiv Ratri* night he went to the temple and noticed a rat prancing up and down of *Shiv Ling* and steading away sweets and fruits offered by devotees during the day. It may be noted that the meaning of word *Ling* in Sanskrit and Hindi is gender and symbol (चक्र) and not any part or organ of human body which non-Hindu scholars have intentionally mislead people to believe otherwise and exploited it for vested interests to mean it not gender or symbol.

The episode set young **Mool Shankar** thinking as to how could Almighty god allow an humble rat to belittle him like that and let it steal the offerings. Being an immature and inexperienced teenager having no knowledge about basic truths of Hindu religion including real significance and necessity of idol worship his mind revolted out of sheer ignorance against worship of idols. After sometime he left home to learn truths about *Hinduism*, approached several mahatmas, religious leaders and monks, but those guides could not satisfy his intellectual quest and logic. Finally, he arrived at Mathura where **Swami Virjanand Saraswati** was residing near the bank of *Yamuna*.

Swami Virjanand was blind from birth belonging to a village known as *Kartarpur* lying between *Jallandhar City* and *Beas* in Punjab, India. It is now a flourishing town, famous for furniture, export it throughout India and abroad. **Virjanand** was orphaned as a child and turned out of home by his elder brother's wife. Ultimately he reached *Mathura* and engaged in learning *Hindu* scriptures. He had a splendid memory and learnt by heart and memorized all whatever he was taught.

He became a versatile scholar of *Vedas*, *Brahmans*, *Upanishads*, six *Sutras*, *Gita*, *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat* etc. in Sanskrit and live the life of a sage and savant. There is a memorial to him in Kartarpur.

The boy **Mool Shankar** solicited his guidance and studentship. After many years of incessant hard work, discipline and efforts the brilliant disciple's education and learning was completed. He had learnt everything which Swami Virjanand himself knew. The time for *Guru Dakshina* came. Swamiji and his disciple **Dayanand**, the name given by his *Guru*, stood in Yamuna water, when he demanded a promise to preach *Vedic Gyan* throughout his life in return of his teachings. Dayanand agreed and Swami Virjanand gave him blessings and wished good luck in his endeavours. Dayanand kept his promise and dedicated his whole life in that mission remaining bachelor and spending his life as an ascetic. Swami Virjanand had in mind particularly the plight of *Hindus* in *Punjab* and north western region of then India right from *Peshawar* in North to *Karachi* in south(most of which is now Pakistan) as Islam was in ascendance in that region and conversion to it was rampantly going on fast pace.

Swami Dayanand toured whole of India and had religious discourses with many Hindu Religious heads and leaders like **Swami RamKrishna ParamHans** – Guru of **Swami Vivekanand**, **Raj Narain Bose** – chairman of *Brahmo Samaj*, Hindu Sanatanist Heads at Kashi, Allahabad, Mathura, Agra, Ayodhya, Nasik, Puri and many other places, **Madam Balvatsky** – the founder and head of *Theosophical Society*, *Mahatmas* in *Haridwar*, and *Rishikesh*, Christian Bishops and Pastors also. He also corresponded even with **Max Muller**, a French Thinker. After vast study, deep thought, deliberation,

contemplation, meditation, and *Tapasya* (तपस्या) on the banks of Ganga, he formulated his mission, drew outlines, and charted its course and line of action.

For the purpose he founded *Arya Samaj* at *Bombay* on *Baisakhi day* in 1875 when he was 52 years old. He believed that *Brahmin Popes* were the arch villains and deceivers of their flock of the faithful. He also denounced swarms of bogus *Sadhus* or *Mahatmas*, who are the curse of India even today and who make religious confusion worse confounded by misleading the masses.

He was the first sage in modern times to take up the slogan of humanism. He had the vision to declare:-

“Some day there will be one religion of humanism, a super religion embracing all religions and all their scriptures – rather than a plethora of mutually warring faith.”

He took steps to revitalize *Hinduism*, to purge it of socio-religious ills and stop religious encroachment by other Non-Hindu religions particularly Islam and Christianity, which are of foreign origin and still hold extra territorial loyalties seeking guidance from outside India.

The main points of controversy and contention between *Arya Samaj* and *Sanatanist* is idol worship or *Murti Puja* and worship of *Nirakar* (निराकार) and not of *Sakar* (साकार). Let us examine these issues one by one. The word *Murti* or Idol has vast connotations. *Murti* means a figure of any shape or form in flash, stone, soil, paper, leaf, wood, metal, glass, plastic, ice, cotton, wool, hair, skin, hide or of anything else. Even a mental shape or figure in imagination is a *Murti*. It has boundary , may it be linear, horizontal, verticle, circular or of any geometrical

or non-geometrical shape. It can have dimensions like length, breadth, height, thickness or depth. It may be single dimensional or multi dimensional. It can be a picture, photograph, film, microfilm, a painting, sketch, cartoon, outline, a single line, cluster, oflines and even a point. All fall in the category of *Murti*. Under the definition a written word or any alphabet of any language is also a *Murti*. Written words are visualized pictures of sound produced by any source. The real words as uttered are sounds but to convey those, different languages have been devised to convey the purpose and purport in the present or future time through written scripts. In a broader sense the visualized or actually seen visions of rarified matter like that of flame or fire or the visible image of light of a sun, moon, star or any other source are *Murti* too.

What is *Puja* (पूजा). According to Hindi dictionary the word means (आदर) and (सल्कार/अर्चना) etc. The English translation would be offerings, reverence, respect, welcome. Any of these actions towards a person, an object or article is *Puja*. In ordinary sense puja is taken to be worship. According to Swami Dayanand, *Deva* (देव) means who gives good things for the welfare of others without demanding anything in return (*Dev* and *Devta* are synonymous). God is *Deva* because He is the giver of infinite blessings for the benefit of his creation. In this sense scholars who give true knowledge for the good of others are also *Devas*. It is in this sense that mother, father and preceptor are also enjoined to be worshipped like *Devas*. From the definition given by Swami Dayananda of *Devas* our acts of offering homage in words and in the shape of material articles to our parents, preceptors, elders and scholars constitute worship or *Puja* as per Swami Dayananda's perception and belief. The question now arises? Is that not *Murti Puja*, because none can

see a soul and body is a *Murti* an apparent exhibit of the form or shape of soul by means of which one can be recognized. So, in the real world, who does not do this sort of *Murti Puja*.

Further, when we do havan or yagya the burning fire has a shape which is murti of an important heat element of nature like water, air and earth or soil. The fire is offered *samagri* and *ghee* as obtain to propiate like sweet and flowers offered to a *Murti* in temples or homes of *Sanatanist*. Whether you consider fire as representing Nature or God is immaterial, because in both cases it is a *Murti* or image and not a real thing. While doing havan mantras are chanted. Similarly in *murti-puja*, *Arti* (आरती) is sung. What is the difference between *havan/yagya* and worship of a murti in real sense. The names and means are different but purpose and object or goal remains the same. Every body cannot afford to do havan daily as it is a costly affair for poor people. The worship of a murti in a temple was introduced to help particularly such masses, which practically costs nothing because offering of any kind material is not mandatory but voluntary and of free will. Even a leaf is acceptable as material offering. The real offering to god is surrender from heart sincerely. As such, why to object the *Murti Puja* by *Sanatanist*.

Every *Hindu* including *Arya Samajis*, revere and respects *Om* (ॐ) even when it is written word anywhere. It is also worship of a *Murti* because real and actual *Om* in reality is formless, shapeless, limitless and is not confined in boundaries. *Arya Samaj* is bow to the picture of Swami Dayananda. It is a sort of *Murti Puja*. *Muslims* too pay highest regard, reverence and respect to written *Allah* or pictures of *Kaaba* of Saudi Arabia. They put *Quran* over their heads which mean bowing to it. These are all forms of *Murti Puja*, thought they will not admit it.

Now what is *Nirakar* and *Sakar*. The word *Sakar* means *Sarup* (स्वरूप), *Akrito* (आकृति). Thus, the words *Murti* and *Akar* (आकार) are synonyms. What has been said in relation to *Murti* also holds good in case of *Sakar*. *Nirakar* means formless and not confined in boundaries.

Again what is *Bhakti* or *Bhagti*? In Sanskrit, we have two words *Puja* and *Bhakti*. The former conveys a limited and another or latter a broader and deeper meaning and sense. In English, there is only one word for both worship, which does not convey the difference between the two *Sanskrit* words. After all what does *Bhakti* really means. In actual matter of fact it means and implies constant and continuous thinking and contemplation of alongwith pursuit and desire to acquire, obtain or achieve a certain process, capability, object or a person.

It is impossible to imagine or visualize an abstract thing which has no shape or form. It is even much harder and very difficult to focus attention on an abstract article. Concentration and meditation on such an object is fruitless in the beginning. To become a scholar one must start from the alphabets without having understanding of true meaning and realization that they represent different sounds. Whether one becomes Nobel Laureat, a doctor of science, an expert, a graduate or a matriculate one has to start with learning of alphabets. Similarly, one has to first focus attention and concentrate in meditation or worship on a Sakar object. So *Murti Puja* and *Murti Bhakti* are basic fundamentals on the path of god realization. The *Murti* can be external or internal i.e. mental or in imagination, though mental *Murti Puja* is superior to worship externally with flowers, because it involves the practice of focusing and concentration on a imagined figure or form, which everyone has to do or should do

after external *Puja* and *Bhakti* in order to progress in spirituality and the ultimate goal of truth realization. Yet both are *Murti puja* or worship. So, how in the beginning one can meditate upon *Nirakar Brahm*, who is beyond human comprehension.

Late Swami Shivanand Saraswati, *Founder and head of Divine Life Society*, Rishikesh, Haridwar, India, which has its branches world wide, wrote in his book “*All about Hindusim*” as quoted below:-

“Idology or Murti Puja is the beginning of religion. Certainly it is not its end. Murti is very essential for the purposes of concentration and meditation in the beginning. The mind is disciplined in the beginning by fixing it on a concrete object or symbol. However, intellectual one may be, he can not concentrate without the help of a symbol in the beginning. In the beginning, concentration or meditation is not possible without a symbol. Any symbol is absolutely indispensable for fixing the mind. The mind wants a prop to lean upon. It can not have conception of the absolute in the initial stage and thus can not centralize.”

The Idol or a Murti is a support for the neophyte. It is a prop for his spiritual childhood. For a beginner a pratima or a figure is an absolute necessity. Symbol or a murti is like a slate, which is useful for a boy of first standard. It is a grossform of Sadhna. It is prescribed for the practice by the beginners with a gross-mind and for advancing on the path, meditation has to be done. Bhakti is of two kinds viz. Higher Bhakti or Para Bhakti and Lower Bhakti or Ritualistic Bhakti, which is formal Bhakti. Hindu philosophy and Hindu mode of worship does not stop or end with worship of Idol alone. Hinduism leads the aspirants gradually from material images then to personal God and from personal God to impersonal God or Absolute God.”

God of *Vedant* is a principle and not a person. *Advaita Vedant* theory is that the whole world is made of one substance, and the sum total of all energies remains the same. *Brahm* or *Brahmin* is not a person or a thing. It is absolute energy, reservoir of all energy, sum total of all energy of the universe, all pervading, self-existing power, that one where in abide all things existing, one in which everything is born, everything exists and everything absorbed or merged.

Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh or erroneously called **Shiv**, are not three different Gods but denote and correspond respectively to three functions of the Creator Brahm, viz. creation, preservation and destruction or merger, of one and the same Divine. They are like three main subroutine-stations of electricity producing Main Power House, each serving a particular area or a purpose. These are main subroutine-power or energies of the supreme Reservoir of Energy. Other Hindu gods and goddesses are transmission lines of that Energy performing particular functions assigned to them. They have been visualized and depicted in human forms and figures for giving better conception, perception and understanding to gross minds of humanity at large. As different individuals have different likes and dislikes, varied tastes, separate temperaments, diverse behaviour pattern a differential degree of appreciation of a particular power, attribute or quality of God the Creator, ancient *Rishis* and *Mahrishis* devised different Gods and Goddesses so that anybody can choose and select a particular one catering to his or her aptitude for *Puja* and *worship*.

When we connect and utilize electricity from any transmission line the electrical energy is the same having same properties and characteristic. However, its useful effect depends on the kind of gadget and the purpose for which it is used. Moreover,

the total energy or voltage does differ and matter and it cannot perform a function beyond its capacity and degree of voltage, though the quality of energy is the same as at Power House. Further, transmission line is a longer route to reach the Power House, which is the object of god realization. It means it may require many births and rebirths to achieve ultimate goal. Thus, it is not proper to condemn it as useless or fruitless and deride its existence i.e. of *Murti Puja*.

According to **Swami Dayanand** other Gods too are performing their distinct functions, all under the superme one and deriving authority from Him. He has all the power. He is *Shakti* (Power) and is source of all energy. According to him many hymns of *Vedas* are open to three interpretations- ritual, philosophical and scientific. He says God has numerous names. His list included **Devi, Lakshmi Mata, Shree, Saraswati** and **Shakti**. Also like **Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, Divya, Suparana, Yama, Garrutman, Matarishuna**. God is Aum (all pervading), **Indra** (full of wealth and splendour), **Hiranyagarbha** (source of energy). He is called **Ganesh** or **Ganpati** (leader of all). He is **Rudra** (who makes others weep) because he inflicts punishment on evil doers. *Acharya* and *Guru* are names of God.

It is, therefore, to be wondered as to where lies justification and more superiority of *Arya Samaj* to ridicule worship of various Gods, who have any of the names enumerated by **Swami Dayanand** and which are ascribed as names of God; when *Sanatanists* worship them.

To my understanding *Arya Samajists* try to focus attention and meditate on Sun, symbol *Om* (ॐ) or any object which in reality are all *Murties* or *Akars* of one kind or another. So what is

the difference between *them* and *Sanatanists* with regard to *Murti Puja* or worship or *Sakar*. If I am wrong, ask them the object on which they meditate considering it be *Nirakar*. One can not meditate on *Akash* or space or void as *Nirakar* because that would bring the existence of Sun, Moon, Stars or Galaxies, which are all *Sakars*, to their mind's eye. So how do they meditate and on what? Simply performing external *Yagyas* or havens can not liberate them from incarnation and cycles of life and death, because without internal meditation none has ever realized God or can do it in future.

To try to prove their point about condemnation of *Murti Puja* they raise, refer to and lay stress and emphasis on the incident of rat jumping upand down of *Shiv Ling* in *Shivalaya* as witnessed by the boy **Mool Shanker**.

They do not realize that had that episode not happened there would never have been a **Swami Dayanand Saraswati**, into which that boy blossomed later, who worked hard all his active life to reform, revive and revitalize degenerating Hindu Faith, getting rid of evil effects of other non-Hindu religions in Hindu minority areas and halt the tide of conversions of ignorant Hindu masses to other faiths like Islam and Christianity. His tireless work affected all future generations of *Hindus*. The incident inspired him and set him thinking about the true nature and meaning of god along with his mode of worship according to Hindu belief and faith, the underlying principle and reality thereof.

In a way it was god's hand which propelled and guided him towards the realization of eternal truth and salvation. God provides only hints of guidance, direction and opportunities for certain action for the betterment and upliftment of every human

being either through events in life creating particular circumstances and climate for it or through some other human. He never appears in person before anybody in His true identity or formlessness. One has to thank God for the event rather than ridiculing it and along with god himself. It tantamounts to insult of God and his wisdom to depict it as his apparent helplessness and lack of action on his part, when as a matter of fact he was very much informed and knowledgeable as well as constructively helping the boy in his future development and advancement of his worshipper. *Swamiji* had hereditary genes of Sanatanist faith in god, which developed and flourished in real comprehension of true eternal religion. Those invisible genes became foundation and corner stone for his future uplift and advancement. It was not *Swamiji*'s choice and selection to be born to such parents where he could acquire those genes. It was God's will and design, as god desired to help *Hindus* through him.

An entity is known and defined by the description of its qualities, attributes, tendencies and functions along with its apparent visible manifestation. So, the conception and comprehension of god has been derived from and based on His manifestation and creation in the form of Universe as a whole and also on visible figuration of whole creation together, which is called *Brahmand* (ब्रह्मांड) in Sanskrit. It comprises of two words *Brahm* (ब्रह्म) and *Und* (अंड), meaning thereby egg of *Brahm*. It brings instantly to the mind shape and form of universe which is oblong or oval almost identical to egg. That is why it has been represented by Saints and Sages of yore as an oblong stone designated as *Shiv* i.e. symbol of *Shiv* which is also one of names of *Brahm* the creator. Hence *Shiv Ling* is the best and near perfect depiction of the formless creator.

Can a person give a better illustration? Of course not. Such was their wisdom.

People following *Arya Samaji* views are missing another important aspect of *Murti Puja, Aarti* etc. in temples and homes. Few *Hindus* know real significance of aarti, blaring of conch and ringing of bells accompanying it as well as the reason of its induction as a part of daily worship by our very wise Sages and Rishis. It is doubtful that even the priests and religious persons can explain the true meaning, significance, importance and implication of these rituals. People have become totally adhered to and consumed by the exterior and external ceremonies, rites, rituals, tradition and customs only, thereby ignoring the real purpose or objective which is the inner practice of concentration and meditation on one's own *Isht* (इष्ट) or deity of choice. Our saints could foresee the degeneration and obliteration of the real purpose and object of devotion and worship. To keep us on track and to continually and constantly remind us of the goal and right course they had introduced the aarti of the deity with a burning lamp, blaring of conch shell (शंख) and tolling of bells in the daily worship.

When a person has attained a certain state of deep concentration and meditation called *Samadhi* (समाधि) after continued practice, he internally sees a light or *Jyoti* (ज्योति) like that of a flame of burning lamp and simultaneously can also hear the internal sound of a conch and the bell. God is *Jyoti Swarup*. He is all light. He is self effulgent light of the Universe. Whole of the visible and invisible universes were created by sound and light – the only visible form of God is expansive light. The lamp lighted during aarti also reminds that each of us is part of that Supreme light or *Jyoti*. Both science and religion declare from

house top that light is the source of sustenance of living beings. To merge in the Divine light is the goal of spirituality and highest purpose of life on the earth. Seeing of light and hearing of those sounds is a definite sign of considerable spiritual achievement and growth. It was not in vain and not only for enjoyment of outer or external music that these rituals were made integral part of daily worship. It was to remind us of our spiritual goal every time we go before the Lord or God whether in temple or home. Coming face to face with that Jyoti is the ultimate rung of the ladder of Patanjli's yoga system also. In that system it is described as *Sahasrar* or *Sahasrakar* meaning thousand petalled lotus or *Chakra*.

The controversy and contention about *Murti Puja* is meaningless, fruitless, meritless and a simple and pure exercise in futility by those ignorant brethren, who lack and true understanding or underlying principle and philosophy of great *Hindu* religion called *Sanatan Dharma* or *Vedic Dharma*. They should refrain and abstain from such a useless controversy which divides *Hindus* instead of uniting them and without any benefit to *Hindu* society.



5

KARMA

*W*hat is Karma? According to Hindi dictionary, *Karma* means *Karya, Dhanda, Kaam, Acharan, Kriya, Bhagya, Prarabdha* etc. *Karma* in common parlance and usage is defined as action. Any motion, being sort of action also fits under the definition of *Karma*. Therefore, Saints characterize *Karma* as *Gati* or motion/movement. They also say that manifestation or creation originated from or ripple effect in eternal absolute calm, serene and motionless supreme being which can be nothing other than motion of undetermined magnitude which developed in sound vibration – sort of motion. Both spirituality and science have determined that the manifestation started with sound.

The causeless causation of motion was the first primeval *Karma*. In other words it was the first action. It being spiritual action is the root cause of all motion in all the visible and the invisible universes. Everything is in motion since then and shall so continue in every cycle of creation/manifestation and *Maha Pralaya* the great dissolution.

The motion in universal mind creates motion in the individual mind also. Only change can be considered as the only one

constant feature. So everything in the universe is constantly in motion or doing *Karma*.

Every *Karma* is done with a motive, purpose is to achieve happiness, though what constitutes happiness depends on individual point of view in accordance with one's natural tendencies, *Prakirti* of *Swabhav*. It differs from person to person and changes with circumstances prevailing at certain period in time. As worldly happiness is transitory, so one goes on performing different kinds of *Karma*'s in its pursuit. Till that stage continues one can be considered ignorant of reality. Therefore, *Karma* consciously done is generally a state of ignorance. Everyone is under the compulsion to perform *Karma*, whether one wishes or not, both in wakefulness and dream state. The practice of meditation or *Yoga* is also a *Karma*.

Whatever is happening in this world is *Karma* and none can escape it. **Goswami Tulsi Das**, the author of *Ram Charita Manas*, has said:

"Vishav pradhan karam kar rakha

Jo jus kin tus phal chakha."

Each human being possesses two main instruments to perform *Karma* – Mind and Body. *Karma* is performed both in thought and deed. Mind is the source and the instigator of thought and a thought is the precursor of deed. Some thoughts are translated into deeds through five sense organs, where as some thoughts remain restricted to mind only. There is no moment in life, except in deep dreamless sleep and deep samadhi, which is not afflicted with some thought of necessity and helplessness and thus causes perennial stream of actions and *Karmas*.

Till one feels, believes and accepts that an external force or outside object is the source of happiness, he or she shall voluntarily perform *Karmas*. All types of work, worship, and acquiring of wisdom and knowledge (*Gyan*) fall under the definition of *Karma*.

Universes, galaxies, stars, planets, saints, yogis, ascetics, thinkers, philosophers, gods, even *Avatars* and also human as well as other creatures are engrossed in *Karmas*. None escapes. Everybody has to perform *Karma* per force.

According to scriptures there are two main categories of *Karma*. One is called *Vihit* or good *Shubh Karmas*, whereas others are classified as *Nishidh* or bad *Karmas*. *Vihit Karmas* have further four sub – division, viz.

- (i) Paryashchit
- (ii) Kamya
- (iii) Namantik
- (iv) Nitya

Paryashchit Karmas are done to counter sins or *Pap Karama* by performance of tap or ascetic practices. Second sub-division *Kamya Karmas* are adopted for fulfillment of certain desire e.g. *Yagya* etc. The third, *Namanik* type are functions or acts prescribed by the society and the community for social and community based purposes for benefits and harmony in humans at large. The fourth, or daily *Karmas* are done as a routine, like sleep, bath, dental and oral hygiene, eating, drinking, evacuation etc. which are done voluntarily. But under this definition also falls one involuntary function that is breathing. These are useful acts for healthy living but provide no spiritual benefit.

Nishidh Karmas are those, which are not generally permitted and are hence prohibited.

Collectively, both *Vihit* and *Nishidh Karmas* are bundled in three other categories. They are described as:

- (i) *Sanchit* or accumulated *Karmas* during number of cycle of births and re-births including some actions which are being performed during the present birth, but the reward or punishment for these is deferred to some later birth or future.
- (ii) These are designated as *Prarabdha Karmas*, which were performed in previous births forming a part of *Sanchit Karmas*, but are reaped during the present birth. One leaves the world as soon as these *Karmas* are finished.
- (iii) The third category is *Kiryaman Karmas*. These are the *Karmas* or actions performed in the present birth, the fruits of some are reaped in the existing incarnation and rest being added to the account of *Sanchit Karmas*, the fruit to be reaped in the future.

One *Karma* creates thousands of other *Karmas*, **Bhisham Pitamah** of *Mahabharata* a fame while advising **Pandavas** from his deathbed after the expiry of war has said that the question of *Karma* is a complicated one. There is another variety of *Karmas* described as *Nishkam Karma*. In this type of Karma not even an iota of personal motive and desire for the fruit exist. These are simply performed for the benefit and well being of the masses at large or individual. In **Gita**, **Bhagwan Sri Krishna** while dwelling upon *Karma Yoga* has opined that *Nishkam Karmas* do not form a bondage but rather lead to salvation from cycles of incarnation. All other *Karmas* whether

good or bad are sources and cause of bondage, as fruits of those have to be reaped accordingly to individual nature of *Karma* in some reincarnation forced by those Karmas. It is very hard and difficult to remain engaged in *Nishkam Karmas*. It is easier said than done. *Nishkam Karmas* require great efforts and life long practice eschew motive for action and non-desire of its fruit.

Shakespeare has said that fame is the last infirmity of man. All charitable and philanthropic acts as well as establishment of spiritual ashrams, maths, temples, churches, synagogues, mosques etc are motivated by self promotion and to perpetuate one's name. There may be few exceptions inspired by *Nishkam Karma*. Only the originator or the founder knows his real motivation or desire, but he too cannot deceive his conscience and God. If it is not selfless and desireless than it is most likely to constitute a golden chain bonding him to another birth as *Sanchit Karma* in the form of a *Kriyaman Karma*. Even some *Mahatmas* and religious leaders indulge in dubious activities to increase the number of their followers in order to advance the importance and reputation of their establishments and in consequence their own name and fame. At the same time good, noble and commendable actions like charities etc must be practiced by everyone to the benefit all humanity.

It has to be remembered that fruits of any Karma except *Nishkam Karma* are reaped by performance of new *Karma* or action. To illustrate the point few examples can be given. Due to past Karmas a ready meal is placed before a hungry person. He has to lift it, put it in his mouth, chew it and swallow it to satiate his hunger. Again a child is born with a faculty and capacity to become a doctor, engineer, professor, or a saint and a holy person on account of his past Karmas but to develop, bloom and practice

that profession and skill he has to work hard for long period of time in the existing birth. Similarly, a person hale and hearty, sitting in his home receives a phone call, as a result of which he goes out to see person calling and on the way encounters an accident, gets seriously injured, landing him in the intensive care unit of the hospital. The accident had to occur because of his past Karmas but he went out to reap the result, which in itself is a new action or Karma.

Life is structured by *Karmas*. It is said an idle mind is a devil's workshop. Therefore never sit idle. Do not be lazy and lethargic. Keep in action, while awake, as far as possible. However, one has to be cautious and careful that his action/Karma of any type whether in thought, deed or words does not intentionally hurt or harm anybody. Both punishment and reward depend on intention. A surgeon operating on a patient in good faith is never punished for patient's death provided there was no negligence or intention on his part, where as in ordinary circumstances punishment for murder is death. If one's action is accompanied by the intention to harm, then the action will create another evil bondage.

A Saint Has aptly said:

"Karam jo jo karega tu, ant me bhogna padna."

Newton's third law of motion, which states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, is in essence of the law of Karma. **Christian Bible** also says that as you shall sow, so shall you reap. **Islam** is the only one main religion of the world, which does not subscribe to the law of *Karma*. In modern times Edgar Casey, the sleeping prophet of America (1877 to 1945 AD) during his Trans used to describe previous lives of Enquirer's and Questioner's. With his thousands of

readings of past births of his inquisitors, he revived the belief in Karmas and reincarnation of his Christian seekers, which somehow had become obscure in Christianity during the times of Emperor Constantine.

Ordinarily Karmas are performed through our five sense organs and hands and feet etc. but wisdom/knowledge or *Gyan* relates only to intellect. There exists three *Gunas* in the creation viz. *Satogun*, *Rajogun* and *Tamogun*. Both *Satogun* and *Tamogun* have single element, attribute or characteristic or action or Karma. In *Satogun* there is pure light and in *Tamogun* there is simple existence. The duality is found only in *Rajogun*. Pain, comfort, hope, hopelessness, cruelty, forgiveness, hate, love, compassion, enmity, friendship and every type of duel and struggle are in their nature Rajsic. Till one is in gross body, *Rajogun* shall remain active and present even in the greatest saints. Only in deep meditation or *Nirvikalp samadhi* the *Karam* function is paralyzed and suspended.

When one is in action, one should completely engross and absorb oneself with full concentration in work, which shall certainly bring success in achievement of one's objective. This is the first step and procedure in the process of *Karma Yoga*. When the mind is engaged in several activities at the same time, it becomes weak and as a result will power and ability to concentrate gets feeble and less powerful causing failures in endeavours. Mind is the storehouse of all the powers of the body, both mental and spiritual. This habit of concentration and absorption in worldly duties shall also help in concentration of mind in meditation and advancement in spirituality and in due course leads to salvation. Self-forgetfulness in medication becomes means to self-realization.

People who perform *Nishkam Karam* habitually are considered real *Karma Yogis*. The easiest way to attain it is to follow **Bhagwan Krishna's** advice in **Gita**, which is that dedicate every Karma performed to the creator and have no desire to seek its fruit, so that no bondage takes place.



6

MOH

*S*ome time back a retired Engineer-in-chief of U.P. Govt (India), a dear one, posed me the question about Moh that:- “*Yeh Moh Nahin Jata*” and asked how to kill it. Below is reproduced my response to his query which may also help others to understand it in proper perspective, who may be agonizing about it.

The creator of all universes is a complete and total wisdom. He has sent us with five basic urges/attributes to lead a happy and contended life in this world provided correct use is made of those in moderation and appropriate manner. Like when parents send their inexperienced young one to some place on a journey, they equip him or her with all the essential articles which he or she may need as per their anticipation, to have a comfortable journey and temporary sojourn. Similarly, the Creator, who is both our father and mother combined has equipped us with five properties or characteristics of *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahanker*. *Kam* in reality means all types of desires and not only of sex.

So, ‘Moh’ is needed most of all the five urges to live in this world. Moh is nothing but a restricted and limited form of love.

Our love and affection for all our relatives, near and dear ones comes under this definition. When we expand this, it becomes compassion, sympathy and empathy for others also. We utilize this in different forms under different names. To live peacefully and harmoniously in society that *Moh* in variable degrees is essential. If it is expanded and extended further it takes the form of universal brotherhood of mankind. *Sages, Saints, Prophets* and *Avtars* have all said that God is nothing but all pervading Love. They all preach Love. A saint of Maharashtra named **Nisarg Datta** (1897- 1981) has said:

“Life is love and love is life. Without love all is evil.
Life itself without love is evil.”

In English we have only one word love but in Sanskrit we have different words for expressing the same sentiment towards our dear and loved ones. It is called *Shradha* (श्रद्धा) towards elders and respected ones, *Sneh* (स्नेह) towards brothers, sisters, friends and equals, *Vatsalya* (वात्सल्य) towards youngers, *Prem* (प्रेम) between husband and wife or male and female and *Bhakti* (भक्ति) or devotion towards *Isht*, God or *Guru*. When God is love, then *Moh*, which is also a form of love acquires and assumes some degree of divinity. So who can make *Moh* to disappear and get killed. It is impossible. None, I repeat none, is able to do it. Nobody can ever destroy a natural attribute or divine gift. That is my opinion and understanding.

Moh can also be classified or defined as attraction. What is gravity or gravitation? That is nothing but attraction. Whole of the universes, all the galaxies, countless stars and planets are in motion and exist in harmony and safely based on the law of Gravitation. Centripetal and Centrifugal forces are two aspects of gravitation i.e. two sides of the same coin. So *Moh* is natural

not only in humans but also in all the creatures of the universe. It is a part of Godhood. Therefore none, however high spiritually one may be, can escape or is devoid of it. Do the saints not love mankind and other beings.

Hence, forget to be totally relieved of it. Not attainable. So then what can be done under the circumstances. One can reduce it, one can eschew its excess. One can curtail obsessions towards one's progeny, children and near dear ones to heart. Had there been no *Moh* in the world, no species of any kind could exist. One could not care, nurture and nourish, help, cooperate, sustain as well protect ones loved ones, if *Moh* was not there. To sustain and nurture is the main quality, attribute, function and duty of *Bhagwan Vishnu*. So *Moh* is expressed of that quality in miniature and restricted form in humans. But one should not be consumed with this passion forgetting all others except one's own offspring.

After all none of us had preconceived idea of bringing a particular soul/souls as one's own child or children. They are born according to eternal Law of Karma and our joint previous *sanskars*. Our children and family members are simply and purely a sacred, trust placed in our custody and charge by the Supreme Will only to perform our duty towards them thereby reducing the burden of our past *Karmas*. We just have to render our obligations as our duty towards them as father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, son or a daughter. We have no right to consider them as one of our possessions or property because their real owner is the Lord and not us. If we treat them as our property and consider ourselves to be owners or proprietors, it is absolutely and entirely a breach of sacred Trust with our creator. When we try to become owner or possessor, the punishment comes in the form of excessive and unnecessary *Moh*,

which has consequences as pain and suffering in the shape of mental agony and loss of peace of mind.

When our children get married they get so much involved and absorbed in their immediate family to almost the point of forgetfulness, negligence or carelessness towards parents that they do not or cannot respond with reciprocal love and affection to the same degree as parents do. Then should we continue to linger in our obsessive *Moh*? Would it be wise? Having done our duty towards them, we should beat retreat and look forward more towards our greatest duty and purpose for which we are sent to this Earth i.e. to progress and advance spiritually. If we voluntarily do it well and good, otherwise Nature has its own method and ways to accomplish it. We do not owe the same duty towards our grandchildren, because their parents have been instrumental for their existence and not us. Now in reality it is primarily job and duty of those who became instruments for their human existence. Who will care for our children and grand children when we have left our earthly coil? At least not us. So why not to reconcile and become happy and content to leave their care to the One, who really cares and looks after them even now, when we are alive. Who protects them all the time when parents and grandparents can not be with them all the twenty four hours? So why not depend on Him and leave the responsibility to His Grace and Mercy, where it rightly and actually belongs. Excessive indulgence in ourself proclaimed care of them cannot be more beneficial to any party, either they or us.

Have we taken our parents to Paradise or *Swarg*? No! Then will our children carry us to heavens? If not, then the question arises as to why we should not do our duty to reach heaven by our own actions and mental make up i.e. State of mind of which '*Moh*' is a component.

Now I shall dwell upon as to how to reduce and keep it at moderate level. I shall only tell what is my comprehension and understanding. I may be all wrong. I do not claim to be an authority on it. You can derive your own conclusions. There are two methods to control it. Either make it every very small by restricting it to one's own self only i.e. reducing it to absurdity. Become only self centered, extremely selfish, everything for self not caring a bit for others. This is impossible, it can not be accomplished living in this world and society.

The second method is to expand and enlarge our *Moh* to such an extent as to encompass all beings. When practiced it transforms *Moh* to Universal Love, which is obverse face of detachment. Our *Rishis* and *Sages* prescribed *Van Parastha* (वनप्रश्च) and *Sanyasa* (सन्यास) *Ashrams* for practical achievement of this goal. However, in present age few can renounce family and children to enter and adopt these prescribed *Ashrams*. To my mind in order to embark on this path of expansion and enlargement of *Moh* one can put it into practice by devoting some time to the selfless service of fellow humans – not only his own family members in some form or the other according to one's own circumstances.

The main characteristic of our mind is to get attached to whatever it comes in contact with through our five senses. Our *Rishis*, *Yogis* and *Sages* having recognized this faculty or trait of mind proceeded to make use of this quality of mind for spiritual uplift. They presented it (the mind) a better and a greater thing to be attached with. Whereas all worldly attachments result in pain or suffering at one time or another, the attachment with one's spiritual Ideal is a continuous joy and bliss. A continuous practice of meditation on one's Ideal (a God, Goddess, Prophet, Avtar or Guru) gradually causes attachment with worldly

objects and humans to decrease and the pain of separation also reduces proportionally.

Second method should be adopted simultaneously with daily meditation on one's own *Isht*. Both combined together will begin to produce desired result of gradual reduction in *Moh* and the reduction shall become appreciable in due course of time. *Moh* is also a tool and instrument to serve others. It (method) is attachment for detachment. It is what **Gita** also teaches i.e. *Nishkam Karma* (निष्काम कर्म) which is a mean to ultimate detachment.

Surely the process is slow. The habit of attachments inherited from numerous births and rebirths can not disappear instantly. However, the success is certain and definite. Discrimination (भेदभाव) will lead to detachment, detachment will ensure right action and right action will build the inner bridge for real being.

Our *Saints* and *Mahatmas* do advise in their spiritual sermons and discourses about *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar* that “*In Panchon Ko Maro*.” People simply take their literal meaning, which saints do not really mean. Understanding of people is flawed. Normally, when some person does something undesirable or unacceptable, one generally responds with the words:- “*Maroon ga*.” The real intention is not to kill but to convey that thrashing or beating would be resorted to curb untoward tendency. Saints also imply to curb or discipline or control or moderate our five attributes or traits of mind. It is impossible to completely annihilate or to reduce to zero or to renounce *Moh* totally and absolutely.



7

YAGYA

*T*he most important aspect of *Sanatan Dharma* is *Yagya*. It also asserts that the performance of *Yagya* is very meritorious. The custom of performing *Yagya* is very ancient and is prevalent in our society since the times of *Vedas*. Why did *Rishis* and *Sages* introduced *Yagyas* or oblations. What were the merits they pursued. One merit of *Yagya* is that it purifies the atmosphere. Second and the most important is hat it helps in the fulfillment of one's desires including the highest and sublime desire of spirituality culminating into moksh or liberation from the cycles of birth and death.

King Dashrath of *Ramayana* performed a *Yagya* to beget sons, where, *Rishi Shringi* presided as chief priest. The *Prasad* of the *Yagya* was eaten by Queens *Kaushalya*, *Kaikayee* and *Sumitra* as a consequence of which *Rama*, *Lakshmana*, *Bharat* and *Shatrughna* were born. *Bhagwan Rama* and *Pandava King Yudhistira* of *Mahabharata* performed *Ashv Medh Yagya*. Our *Rishis* used to perform *Yagyas* for spiritual uplift. One example is of *Rishi Vishwamitra* in *Ramayana*, when he took away *Rama* and *Lakshmana* in his *ashram* or retreat to perform *Yagyas* unhindered by *Rakshasas Khad*, and *Tadika*.

Recently *Gayatri Maha Yagya*, *Shanti Yagya*, *Swasth Yagya* and *Varsha Yagya* etc. have been performed on large scale in India. At the time of every *Hindu* ceremony or *Sanskars* right from birth through *Mundane*, *Kanchhedan*, *Marriage* to *Death* and also there after, *Havan Yagyas* are usually performed all over the world. In India havens are daily performed in *Arya Samaj Mandirs* or temples. Even some *Arya Samajis* do oblation daily in their homes.

So what is *Yagya* and its real meaning. In reality *Yagya* is the nourishment of a desire within our heart and then perform actions to achieve the desired goal. Twelve different forms of *Yagya* were propounded by **Bhagwan Krishna** in the 4th chapter of **Bhagvad Gita**. He has declared that *Gyan Yagya* is the top most and the best *Yagya* to attain *Moksh*. But *Gyan Yagya* for worldly persons is very-very difficult to perform because so many requirements and conditions are needed to be fulfilled. *Gyan Yagya* can be performed and practiced by a few, who have following qualifications;

"Vishyon sai jo hoye udasa,
Parmarath ki ja munn asha.
Dhan santan preet nahin ja ke,
Khojat phirai saadh guru aa kay."

Any body leading a family life, having so many worldly responsibilities and desires to be fulfilled, can not be expected to be proficient in *Gyan Yagya* nor every body wants *Moksha*. Ordinary human beings like me have so many different desires and wishes in life. Thus, *Gyan Yagya* can be performed successfully by a few.

Children and young persons wish to acquire education and learning. Those, who are unemployed, desire to earn livelihood, which is most essential to remain alive. Others wish speedy progress in their profession or business. Some want offsprings. Still others have to discharge their worldly responsibilities. Sick persons need to be cured of their ailments. So there should be some remedy or a type of yagya for our different kinds of woes and miseries. *Sanatan Dharma* being a complete religion in all respects as well as aspects of life provides means for all schools of thought.

We all know that there is one electric power but its effects and results vary according to the gadgets or appliances we use, through which it passes i.e. like a fridge, a heater, a bulb or floorescent tube, a T.V., a V.C.R., a computer, a fan or an air conditioner etc. Similarly, the real power source in this world is only one creator or God.

Our *Rishis* and *Sages* were very wise. They created and devised images of different Gods and Goddesses for the purpose of fulfillment of all types of desires of all human beings. These are divine and subtle forces deriving power from the same one Entity – The Reservoir of all powers and energies. These divine forces have been given human forms. A different or a specific divine force is to be visualized, invoked and worshipped for the accomplishment of a specific desire or wish. For example **Lakshmi** for wealth, **Saraswati** for learning of all sorts including arts, **Ganesh** for the attainment of proficiency in different skills and vocations, **Vishnu** for general alround prosperity, **Vishwakarma** for engineering construction skill and crafts, **Durga** for success in battles wars and conflicts, **Mahadev** for cures of disease as well as *Yog* or

spiritual attainments, **Brahma** for offsprings, **Hanuman** for courage and valour etc. However, if one desires *Moksha* or liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirths, one has to propitiate and worship the Creator or **Brahm**.

There are two different methods of performance of *Yagya* or oblation. One is external and the other is internal. The best thing would be to do it within oneself or the internal, but as people are unable to visualize any form within, they start to worship without in temples or at homes. Every *Yagya* whether external or internal has four components. First is the purpose, desire or wish. Second is invocation and propitiation of a certain Deity by chanting of mantras, who can grant the boon to fulfill a particular desire. Third is *samagri* or articles for *Ahuti* as an offering to the sacrificial fire. Fourth is the fire itself for *Ahuti*.

Generally people believe in and practice external *Yagya*. When an external *Yagya* is performed a fire is lit while reciting *Ved Mantras*. Various edibles mixed with herbs and *Ghee* (purified butter) are offered to the fire with the accompaniment of chanting of *Ved Mantras*. Different *Mantras* in *Sanskrit* have to be recited depending on our different desires and their correct pronunciation is very important. Thus, it became the patrimony of the learned *Brahmins* to perform the *Yagya* according to the *Vedic* texts and of those who have sufficient resources to bear the expenses. Also, the learned and qualified *Pandits* were not available in sufficient numbers to cater to the demands of the public at large.

Then what about those who are poor and ignorant of *Sanskrit*. How can they perform *Yagya* and have their desires fulfilled. Have they to remain deprived of it. The answer is a big NO. If so, then how can they perform a desired *Yagya*. Is there any

way out for them? YES. They too can perform a *Yagya* to get their desire fulfilled and enjoy the fruits of it. For them is the second method i.e. internal *Yagya*. Of course every body without any distinction of age, sex, caste, creed and social status etc. can perform internal *Yagya*.

Note that desires are always fulfilled from within. If you daily visualize the holy form of your Ideal or *Isht* i.e. the Deity specified for the fulfillment of that idea or desire and place your demand before it, your demand is sure to be fulfilled. Why? Because the principle of demand and supply operates in Nature too, which has all sorts of commodities and material desired by any one. This is simple but basic principle that works.

Now I shall dwell upon this aspect on the basis of what I have learnt at the feet of Saints. The contemplation upon your Ideal or *Isht* for the fulfillment of cherished desire is the real form of internal *Yagya* as propounded by all Saints. Choose only one and not many Ideals or *Ishts* of your own liking and consider him or her the granter of every thing. Have firm faith in him or her. Mark my words ‘ONLY ONE ISHT’ because saints have exclaimed;

“Aik ke sadhay sub sadhai
Sub sadhey sub jaye.”

People generally do not follow this principle. The result is that they do not receive desired rewards or boons in full. To have living faith in your *Isht* is the pre requisite as well as essential. This method is very useful and fruitful for worldly gains and for spiritual realization too. Whatever you beg or pray for, from *Isht*, you will surely get it. Even **Bhagwan Krishna** has declared in **Bhagvad Gita** that He rewards in the

very form that one prays to. We householders or *Grahasts* instead of running after fake *Mahatmas* or *Gurus* and visiting different places of worship and pilgrimage just for the fulfillment of their desires, should travel within. Whatever you have to get depends on your faith in your Isht and will get from within. Be true to yourself and get the secret of the method and technique of meditation or contemplation from a true and perfect Master, who himself has realized Super consciousness within and is a practical practitioner of the method to be taught.

Now let me tell you a story given in a *Puran*:

"There was a Brahmin, who had performed numerous external yagyas. Misfortune fell upon him rendering him a pauper. His wife asked him to visit a king, pledge the king the virtue or fruits earned out of a few yagyas and get some money in return. He was reluctant to follow the suggestion but ultimately on the pleadings and persuasion of his wife he relented and agreed to act on the advice. He started on a long journey. On the way he felt hungry, sat down near a well, washed his hands and feet, prayed and then opened his bundle of breads, which his wife had given him. Before he could start eating, a bitch with her new born pups appeared wagging her tail. Realizing her beseeching for food, he threw one loaf of bread to her, but after eating that she did not appear to be satiated. One by one he gave all the rest of four loaves to her that he had brought from home. Himself hungry he drank some water and proceeded along his journey. He reached the king's court.

The king asked the purpose of his visit when he granted him an audience. The Brahmin offered to pledge fruits of his some of his yagyas in exchange for money. The king asked his guru, sitting nearby, for advice. The guru a practical holy person

advised the Brahmin to come next morning. Next morning day when he reappeared before the king, the guru asked him to pledge the fruits of yagya he performed a day earlier. The Brahmin was flabbergasted and replied that he did not perform any yagya on the earlier day. Guru asserted that he did perform an extraordinary yagya on that day. Brahmin insisted that he did not do any such thing because his understanding was that a yagya must be performed according to the prescribed procedure as laid down in scriptures and he had not done any such act. The guru then pointed out of the act of feeding of the bitch. Then the Brahmin realized its importance. He refused to pledge the fruits of that act and left the court without asking for financial help.”

This one example provided by *Sanatan Dharma* illustrates that hundred and one opportunities or chances are there to perform a *Yagya* for every one including the poorest, illiterate and ignorant person. Even the most poorest can be as charitable as richest. If a person has 25 cents and gives all of them to a really needy and deserving distressed person without any show or display foregoing his own needs he performs a true *Yagya*. It is thousands times better than a donation of thousand dollars by a rich millionaire, because the rich person is not as generous as the poor man having only 25 cents in his pocket. He helps the deserving needy person, is generous and his desires will be automatically fulfilled according to law of *Karma*.

To help a deserving needy person with money, food, water, clothes etc. imparting education of any sort, assistance in learning a skill, dispelling of ignorance, providing solace and comfort to a grieving person, giving sound advice and self less advice, muttering words of encouragement and hope thereby

uplifting the sagging morale and spirits, teaching spirituality etc. are all different kinds of *Yagyas* provided they are done without actual reward or even the hope of a reward in return. We *Grahasts* need a happy and prosperous life first and the pursuit of spirituality comes later and that too is sought for by only a few. An act of sacrifice is the real meaning of *Yagya* and also is its true purpose. However, external measures or actions including the external *Yagya* draw and fix attention outside of our own self, thereby hindering and impeding our progress within. It must be understood that in the beginning external *Yagyas* can be utilized to prepare for the practice within, though they are not much meritorious and beneficial.

To adopt only external measures are for the beginners, but to remain attached to them throughout life is not wise or conducive to progressive within. However, some external measures should continue to be performed such as charity and helping others in different ways without attachment to them otherwise you will not be able to pay your four fundamental debts that you owe to your own parents, society, country and God.

In internal *Yagya* your earnest, keen and burning desire is the fire. The recitation of the holy name of your *Isht* is chanting of *Mantras*. The time and energy your devotee in meditation or contemplation are *Dravya* or *Samagri* and your own self is the *Pandit*, offering *Ahuti*. Thus, all the four components of *Yogya* are present in internal *Yagya* similar to those in external *Yagya*. The fulfillment of your desire is the *Prasad* in both cases.

In scriptures there are mentioned four other bigger kind of *Yagyas*. They are *Ajmedh*, *Ashvmedh*, *Gomedh* and *Narmedh Yagyas*. Literally those mean sacrifice of goat, horse, bull or ox and human. People do not understand the true meanings of

these *Yagyas*. They understand only the *Sanskrit* words, but not the spirit and real meanings or significance of these words. All the four *Yagyas* have spiritual connotations. The goat, horse, bull or ox and human that are referred to in the sacrificial *Yagyas* are not animals or human. No where we are directed to kill animals or human to propiate Gods or Goddesses. The goat, horse, and ox or bull symbolize the three aspects of our mind respectively. They indicate the *Tamoguni* i.e. static, *Rajoguni* or mutable mind and *Satoguni* or sentient mind respectively. Unless a man sacrifices all these three aspects or tendencies of mind one can not realize his true self. A man with preponderance of static or tamoguni mind runs after the satiation of his five senses and cares more for his physical appearance like a goat. *Rajoguni* or mutable mind is very mercurial, thinks too much and his intellect runs wild hither and thither like a horse. *Satoguni* or sentient mind possess the power of discrimination between good and evil. Having desires is a natural faculty of the mind. All our worldly progress depends upon the intensity of our desire. Saints have an internal *Yagya* comprising of *Sumran* or recitation, *Dhyan* or meditation and *Bhajan* or complete mental absorption through hearing of a particular sound as essential ingredients for offering mental faculties to sacrificial fire under the guidance and supervision of a perfect Master. These forces of mind can be annihilated or subordinated thus controlling or channelizing the mind. However, note that one can never kill or annihilate one's mind but it can be directed in a certain direction.

Recitation of holy name of your *Isht* will help controlling the static mind. Meditation and contemplation on the holy form of your *Isht* will enable you to channelizing mutual mind. Hearing of a particular sound or *Bhajan* thereby inducing

complete mental absorption shall control the sentient or *Satoguni* mind. Thus all the three viz *Ajmedh*, *Ashvmedh* and *Gomedh Yagyas* can be performed successfully by the internal method of the saints.

Bhajan or hearing of a particular sound for complete mental absorption is called *Shabd Yog* in simple words, which is found and mentioned in *Dev Yan Marg* of **Upanishads**. It is particularly described in **Nad Bindu UPANISHAD**. The word *Nad* in **Vedas** also hints towards it. Even Buddhist scriptures of *Yogacharya Math* also have reference to it. Previous saint like **Gorakh Nath, Kabir, Nanak, Dharam Das, Dadoo, Paltu, Tulsi Sahib** of *Hathras* in U.P. India, **Swami Shiv Dayal** of Agra, Indian and several other saints have clearly preached and taught *Shabd Yog* to their disciples and seekers of Supreme.

The complete merger of self into Supreme has been characterized as *Narmedh Yagya*. The circumstances, desires and nature differ from one individual to another. Only a perfect *Guru* or Master can discern the requirements and needs of each and every one, according to which he can provide answers and prescribe solutions there of. Hence the importance and dire necessity of a perfect Master is emphasized for explaining the technique of above four *Yagyas* and consequent guidance during their practice.



8

GAYATRI MANTRA

*G*ayatri Mantra is a very sacred and top most *Mantra* of Hindus of all shades, hues and inclinatin. It is chanted on all religious, spiritual, holy and temporal functions like *Yagya*, *Havana*, *Marriage*, *Death* and other *Sanskars* and ceremonies of *Hindus* to invoke blessings and boons from the Almighty. There are specific institutions established in India with branches abroad like *Gayatri Maha Parivar* to propagate and spread its universal use for the benefit of human society through out the globe. It is also advised to be recited and chanted at the time of practice of Sandhya prayers both in the morning and the evening to advance spiritually.

The legend has it that **Maharishi Vishwa Mitra** was the first sage to propound it after years of continuous meditation and perfecting it. Credit goes to him for its introduction. The *Mantra* is also mentioned in *Rig Veda* III.LXIii.10 and *Yajur Veda* 36.3. It, is therefore, indicates that its originator was Maharishi Vishwa Mitra, who lived before or during revelation of *Vedas*. He was the same Vishwa Mitra, who was the father of **Shakuntla**, the mother of the great king **Bharat** after whom the Indian sub-continent is called Bharat. He cannot be the other

illustrious Vishwa Mitra mentioned in *Ramayana*, which was written much later by **Maharishi Balmik** in the *Treta Yuga*.

It is plausible and possible that **Vishwa Mitra** of *Vedas* time, the originator of *Gayatri Mantra*, might have established a spiritual order of monks like **Adi Shankra Acharya** (788-820 or Christian era) and succeeding heads of that order might have also been designated as Vishwa Mitra similar to the present day practice of designating Shankra Acharya of various *Math*. This can also explain the existence of another Vishwa Mitra of *Treta Yuga* mentioned in the *Ramayana* epic during the time of **Bhagwan Ram**.

Vedas are classified as *Shruti*, which means, what was heard by the *Rishis* and *Maharishis* during their meditation. Naturally it can not be any spoken or written language. It must be something unspoken and unwritten one, which could be intelligible and understandable universally for all times to come. What can that be? It can only be primordial sound celestial song/melody, which created all visible and invisible universes. That song was heard by the saints and sages of yore during their meditation and later described in spoken words of the time by those ancient ones, the compilation of which became known as *Vedas* – a *Sanskrit* meaning as knowledge, wisdom or *Gyan*. *Gayatri* means which is sung. What is sung is music only i.e. rhythmic sound; though the words uttered convey the meaning and sense of it. Thus, *Gayatri* find mention in *Vedas* and thereby constituting part of *Shruti*.

Sounds are of two types. One is called *Varnatmik* and the other is known as *Dhwaniatmik* or *Dhunatmik*. *Varnatmik* sound is that which is produced and uttered by external organs and is expressed in words or chants of any language and is also

heard by external ears. *Dhunatmik* sound is the one, which is heard by internal ears, with mouth and eyes, closed during meditation. Though external chanting of mantras does have beneficial effects and results, but only partial, whereas hearing of the internal sound produces full and complete desired benefit.

The original and complete *Gayatri Mantra* is:

*Om, Bhur, Bhuweh, Sweh, Maha, Jana, Tapa, Satyam Tat
Savitur Varaynyam Bhargo Devasya Dhee Mahi Dhiyo Yona
Prachodyat.*

The prevalent *Mantra* used now is invariable truncated version omitting the words: *Maha, Jana, Tapa* and *Satyam*. Late **Swami Shivanand**, the founder of Divine Life Society and Ashram, Rishi kesh near Haridwar, UP, India, which has branches all over the world, needs little or no introduction to the *Hindu* world. In his book “*All about Hinduism*” he recommends the recitation of full and complete *Mantra* for daily *Sandhyas* at dawn as well at dusk.

I had the privilege and good fortune to attend his *Satsangs* in Lahore, Pakistan in the years 1935, 1936 and 1937. He used to be invited to address the religious congregation there (Lahore), annually for the spiritual uplift. This happened before he formally founded the Divine Life Society at Rishi Kesh. He used to start and end his sermons with the chanting of complete *Gayatri Mantra* as noted above. There after he always led and participated in the recitation and mass *Kirtan* of

“Govind jai jai, Gopal jai jai,
Radha raman Hari Gopal jai jai.”

Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal, MA, LL.D (Chicago) of Gopi Ganj, UP, India (1859-1939) was a great person and a versatile scholar of *Sanskrit* and *Hindu* scriptures. He authored hundred of

books, pamphlets and magazines in Hindi, Urdu, English on almost all aspects of *Vedic* religion, *Hinduism*, *Hindu* philosophy and spirituality. He also advocated full *Gayatri Mantra* and has described different loks or regions of universe represented by words *Bhur* to *Satyam*. They are as follows:

- **Bhur Lok:** Earth
- **Bhuweh Lok:** A region between Earth and Surya Lok.
- **Sweh Lok:** Indra Lok. A region between Sun and Dhru Tara or Pole star in the Great Polar Bear.
- **Maha Lok:** In this Lok entities like Bhrigu live.
- **Jana Lok:** Brahma Lok (not Brahm Lok). A region where Brahma reigns and entities like Sanak, Sanandan and Sant Kumar etc. reside.
- **Tapa Lok:** A region where Bairagi like devtas live.
- **Satya Lok:** This is also called Brahm Lok. According to *Hindu* faith and belief anyone who reaches this region is liberated from the cycles of births and re-births.

Satya Lok is a region of nothing but light, to which the later part of the *Mantra* points out, where one comes face to face with reality and truth and attains self-realization. We come from the light and shall return to the light. The whole of *Mantra* is an earnest prayer to the Creator to lead our mind and intellect to that region of the light and therefore to Him. With the practice of sumran of full *Gayatri Mantra* coupled with regular and continued meditation one can expect to enter the domain of *BrahmLok* one day, thus attaining the liberation from cycles of births and deaths as envisioned by **Maharishi Vishwa Mitra**.

Very time we chant *Gayatri Mantra*; it reminds us of our ultimate destination-Light.

According to **Maharishi ji**, one experiences subtle conditions and specific stages of knowledge/wisdom or *Gyan* relating to these regions during the course of upward progress in the spirituality.

In the thinking minds the question arises as to why the truncated version of *Gayatri Mantra* was introduced, advocated and propagated instead of the complete *Mantra*. At what point of time it so happened and who were the initiators of such a move. I had the occasion to raise and discuss these points with some *Mahatmas* and profound scholars of *Sanskrit* literature and *Hindu* scriptures, but they could not provide with satisfactory answers. It can be argued that the purpose is served with truncated version. The argument raises more questions. Are we more wiser, intelligent and experienced that **Maharishi Vishwa Mitra**, who revealed full *Mantra*? Why he could not ordain the truncated form? Further it is said, believed and accepted that for any *Mantra* to be effective and beneficial its pronunciation should be perfectly accurate, as variation of even a maatra of any word can change its sound, meaning and content. The sound is the basis of *Mantra*'s effect or result and wrong pronunciation will thus vitiate its effect, benefit and desired result.

If the wrong pronunciation can vitiate the benefit to be derived, then will not the incomplete and truncated version of the *Mantra* curtail its desired benefit or effect? Probably it is due to his shortcoming that repetitive recital called *Jap* or *Sumiran* does not produce as much benefit as would have accrued from the recital or chanting of complete or full *Mantra*.

It is a subject matter of research and contemplation for *Mahatmas*, religious heads and great-learned scholars of *Sanskrit* and *Hindu* scriptures to find out answers to the above questions. However, even if they could provide satisfactory answers, it shall remain theorized and intellectual exercise of only some historical or practical value. During this period of *Hindu* renaissance, when thousands of *Mahatmas*, religious teachers, scholars, great souls and several institutions and organizations are making efforts in India as well as abroad to revive and restore the glory and the greatness of *Hinduism* and its philosophy, the constructive and practical approach should be to dispel the ignorance about the full text of the *Mantra* and propagate its application and implementation on wide scale among the *Hindu* masses for *Havans*, *Yagyas*, daily prayers, ceremonies and function of *Hindu Sanskars*, so that full benefits are derived. It is never too late to rectify the mistake, may be an inadvertent one; of the past. The responsibility for the revival lies in general with all *Hindus* and with religious and spiritual leaders in particular.



9

BHAGWAN BRAHMA

Bhagwan Brahma is one of the trinity of Gods or subroutine-powers of the creator *Brahm*(ब्रह्म). As a matter of fact it is the first and foremost energy or power entity responsible for the manifestation of whole creation visible as well as invisible. He is first manifested creation and can be considered as virtual embodiment of the creator, endowed with the power of creation, which preceded everything of the whole universe. His appearance signifies the beginning of time, the yardstick of measurement of life cycle of each and every body whether a worldly or celestial one.

Thus, the cosmic **Brahma** is the generator, creator or producer of all things existing. It is the creative energy of the manifested creation without which nothing can be brought into existence or materialized irrespective of gross or subtle nature of created ones. The Universal Mind has produced universes with the assistance of this ethereal energy. Its counterpart or personal Brahma of an individual is miniature or micro replica of cosmic Brahma of macro Universe.

According to *Patanjali's Yoga* system the region of **Brahma** in human body and its sphere of activity and influence lies at

coccyx or tailbone. This is second psychoenergetic center from below, very near the *Muldhara* or *Ganesh Chakra* just above the anus. It is called the *Swadhishtanam* or *Brahma* or *Indri Chakra*. The meaning of *Sanskrit* word *Swadhishtanam* is one's own home. It is visualized as six petalled lotus of orange color. Physiologically it is connected to the nerve ganglia pertaining to the prostate gland in males and uterus in females. Its activity relates to procreation and sexual desire. Procreation is the natural tendency to perpetuate one's species triggered by sexual desire. This *Chakra* is record room or home of all tendencies, attributes and experiences.

Reproductive secretions have been scientifically proven to contain chromosomes, which in turn have deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and ribonucleic acid (RNA). DNA is the store-house of hereditary experiences, characteristics, attributes, tendencies and instructions. Due to worldly experiences and other factors, mutations takes place in DNA of a living person. Thus, science supports the view that *Brahma Chakra* is the store or record room of our experiences or subconscious. When awakened it can bring back old memories or *Sanskars* or impressions of our past *Karmas*. It helps in the self-perpetuation of species also.

The conscious mind receives external experiences, impressions and suggestions through our five sense organs or *Gyan Indris*, registers them and then transfers all these along with thoughts to the subroutine-conscious or the subtle mind. These *Sanskars* or impressions last even after death when the consciousness is lost or destroyed. The subroutine conscious mind forgets nothing. The subtle mind accompanies the soul on death of the body along with the data collected during life time and brings back those sanskars or data to life on re-birth.

The imaginary figure of **Bhagwan Brahma** as visualized by *Rishis* has four faces with white beard and four arms and hands. In one hand is shown a rosary of beads. The second hand holds a book. Third hand clutches a *Kamandal* (कमङ्डल) containing water, whereas the fourth hand is in the blessing pose. His body is off-white in color and the face has a golden hue. The vehicle of Brahma is swan. The four faces signify that he creates all the four main categories of material and living beings. Those four categories are:

- (i) **Khanij** (खनिज) or all types of minerals, chemicals, gases and fluids, which formed the earth, planets, comets, stars etc.
- (ii) Second is named **Bansaj** (बंसज), which means all types of vegetation, plants, trees, shrubs, mosses, algaes etc.
- (iii) Third category has been designated as **Andaj** (अंडज) or which are born out of eggs, such as some fish, crocodiles reptiles, other water animals, birds, insect etc.
- (iv) The fourth category is known as **Jeraj** (जरज) who are born with placenta and are completely formed in uterus like four or two footed animals, apes, humans and other mammals including some fish like whale etc.

Brahma's four faces also indicate them as repository or source of all knowledge propounded in four *Vedas*. The white long beard is indicative of being most ancient of all Gods, who are shown to have no beard and came into existence at a much later time. The white beard also represents wisdom.

The rosary in one hand signifies his origin earlier than time cycles of *Parlayas*, mergers or dissolutions symbolized by the

beads of rosary. In short, the time cycle began with the appearance of Brahma. The book represents intellect from which all types and aspects of knowledge originated. The *Kamandal* or the water pot indicates that all the active and dynamic life has its source in water. The fourth hand in blessing pose is obvious of the fact that the lord showers his grace and boons on all creatures alike. The golden hue of the face symbolizes energy, which is the cause of creation and replication. The off-white color of the body resembles the color of reproductive fluids in the human bodies activated or energized by *Brahma* or *Indri Chakra*.

The portrayal of **Brahma** perched on a lotus sprouting from the navel of **Bhagwan Vishnu** in many pictures supports the fact that it denotes the dependence of fertility, secretions on the blood produced or manufactured by the digestive functions of *Vishnu Chakra*, the seat of Vishnu. The white lotus on which he is shown seated remind us that as lotus has its roots in water but remains always afloat above the water, similarly, the Creator though connected with its manifestation, yet always remains unattached and not affected by it.

Swan is said to be endowed with the power of separating milk from water i.e. it has discriminatory powers to eliminate chaff from the grain. The vehicle as swan is indicative that creative activities of all sorts whether physical, producing progeny, intellectual, manual or even inquiring into the spiritual field should be done with discrimination and open mind; so that resultant product should benefit the humanity and eco-system at large and should not serve narrow selfish ends which may bring misery, conflict and disharmony in the long run. Closed mind and blind following does not lead to healthy and positive *Karmas*. In short, intellect should be utilized with discrimination for good causes and larger benefits and

advantages to all. A *Ved Mantra* says that human being is itself a complete whole as having been derived or separated from the complete whole creator of the universes.

“ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्ण मुदच्यते
पूर्णक्षय पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेषा वशिष्यते।”

The universes were created by the thought power of Supreme Being. Similarly, a human being is capable of creating one's off springs through one's thought, power and without any physical union. In earlier times when human beings were not totally engrossed in the material and worldly desires and were much nearer to their original godhead, then copulation was not necessary for the extension of one's progeny. Their thought or mind power was powerful enough to make that happen.

In our *Puranas* many such cases have been cited. Take the birth cases of **Dhriti Rashter**, **Pandu** and **Vidur** of *Mahabharata* time, who were conceived and came into existence through thought projection of **Maharishi Ved Vayas** without any physical union. Similar are the birth events of **Karan** and five *Pandav* brothers **Yudhister**, **Bhim**, **Arjun**, **Nikul** and **Sehdev**. They were produced by thought process of **Kunti** and **Madri** respectively interacting with five separate *Hindu* Gods representing five forces or subroutine-powers of Nature/Creator. This could happen in the way similar to creation of universes by mind force of *Brahm*. The later example is the Immaculate Conception and birth of **Jesus Christ**.

The modern rationalists, critics, skeptics, doubting Thomases, and non-believers would not accept and may even ridicule such births. For their benefit it would be worthwhile and appropriate to provide some latest evidence from nearer home in USA itself.

There has been an American named **Edgar Cacey** (1877-1945). He was an orthodox protestant Christian and was photographer by profession. He was born near Hopkinsville in Kentucky. Till the age of 24 he was as ordinary a person as any other can be. Later one of his friends discovered his psychic powers but not in his wakefulness. He could go into trance while in sleep or induced sleep. In trance he could reveal many past events, diagnose diseases of other persons, prescribe really effective medicines, providing solutions to other's problems etc. Again on regaining consciousness and reverting to wakefulness he could not remember anything described or revealed in trance. In his lifetime he gave 14,264 readings, which were recorded by others.

There exist organizations known as Association for Enlightenment and Research (ARE), Edgar Cacey Foundation, ARE press, and other affiliated institutions in Virginia Beach, Virginia. ARE is a non profit organization. It has a large library of many published books and lots of literature about readings given by him and explanations of the phenomenal like beginning of the universe, creation, coming of Christ, thousands year old geography of earth, history of different races found on earth, great delusion in Noah's time, incarnation, karmic theory and law, Akashik records, evolution of different living and extinct species, coming of humans on earth and other topics. In his readings he explicitly and specifically stated that in ancient times souls, which were near Godhead, could project themselves through thought process and create living beings.

People generally do not worship **Brahma**. There are only two regular temples dedicated to Brahma's worship in whole of the world. The oldest is in India on the bank of Lake *Pushkar* in the *Aravali* hills about eleven kilometers from *Ajmer* in

Rajasthan. The second is in Japan. As recent as nineteen eighties, two statues one of **Buddha** and the other of **Brahma** were installed under small canopies by some Japanese organization outside Caesar's Palace Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.

More recently in March 1999 a team of Archeological Survey of India (ASI) spearheaded by superintending archeologist **P.K. Mishra** has discovered a 10th century AD temple of **Brahma** constructed (900 A.D.) by Chandela dynasty rulers from granite and sandstone. It was found under Brijmandal mound near Jatkara six kilometers south of Khajuraho, India. This is the 26th documented temple of the fabled original 85 temples of Khajuraho.

A question arises as to why worship of **Brahma** is not so popular. To my mind a probable and plausible reason can be that having been born the people generally do not care and pay attention to their origin or originator, because after birth their immediate necessity and need is mainly for an entity, who can protect, preserve, develop, sustain and maintain them. Thus, the worship of **Bhagwan Vishnu** is very popular and widely practiced. Then comes the fear of loosing one's possessions, inevitable destruction and death. To ward that off as far as possible the worship of **Mahadev/Shiva** are found large in numbers. The two elements of reward or incentive and punishment or fear of punishment are two prime movers in human life to attract, admire, respect, appease and declare loyalty towards:

- A benefactor.
- Authority to punish and capable of causing damage and harm.

The other reason can be that everything is created with the help of intellect and wisdom/intelligence which each and every human being possess individually to a certain degree. So where lies the need to worship **Brahma** the originator or giver of intellect and wisdom— the main and principal instrument and tool of all activities material, intellectual as well as spiritual. A proper use of the intellect with discrimination, which is the subtle architect of all types of creative activities is real oblation and worship of **Bhagwan Brahma**.



10

GODDESS SARASWATI

*S*ince human recognized and appreciated the role and power of natural forces and elements like light, fire, air, water, and earth in their day to day life, the worship of Mother Nature or female aspect of the Creator of Universe was adopted for deriving benefits and to avoid their destructive effect.

So no time limit can possibly be fixed about its origin. God in kinetic and dynamic form is called Nature or *Prakirti, Maya, Shakti* etc. The Supreme Creator being formless and invisible to human eye can not be fully and completely comprehended by persons of average intellect. Everyone knows that in order to describe verbally and understand anything one can only enumerate its qualities, characteristics, attributes and functions. Only the experience of a thing allows full grasp and understanding of that. Same technique was applied to know and understand the Creator. The foremost quality or function of *Brahm* or God is creation. The visible Creation i.e. the existence of innumerable universes, countless galaxies, stars and planets is the earliest and the very first conception of its Creator. The manifestations of Creator's power in the form of

five distinct energies i.e. sound, light, heat, electricity and magnetism translated or transformed into five gross elements of the material universe in which we live viz. *Akash, Air, Fire, Water, and Soil*. There is no equivalent of *Sanskrit* word *Akash* in English, which can convey a complete and total importance of the word.

Hence, humans started to worship and invoke blessings of Mother Nature as a first step, which can help in realizing its source or Creator. Further our *Rishis, Sages* and *Thinkers* came to the conclusion that to lead a successful and happy life one must have physical, economic and intellect cum spiritual power. These are the powers, which govern the full gamut of activities of humans in the attainment of material as well as spiritual benefits and advantages. The Creator too has three prime functions or attributes viz. creation, sustenance including regulation and administration plus its ending, dissolution or merger. The power of creation is symbolized by God **Brahma**, the sustenance and nurturing faculty is characterized by god **Vishnu** and merging or dissolution entity is called **Mahesh, Mahadev, Chander Shekhar, Rudra, Bhutnath, Ganga Dhar, Shankar** and also **Shiv** etc., though the last name Shiv is a misnomer to describe only this function of the creator. The force or powers vested in these primary energies, which may be classified as subsidiary energies have been designated as **Saraswati, Lakshmi** and **Durga** respectively. Thus, three major goddesses were visualized and assigned or considered to be having attributes of intellectual cum spiritual, economic and physical powers, which are very essential to live in this world, though *Hindus* of various regions, hues and colors worship many forms of Goddesses. Being integral part of the trinity of main *Hindu* Gods they have been appropriately described as consorts of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh respectively.

First of all everybody needs physical strength or power of the body which is basic and fundamental to other power i.e. economic and intellectual needed for fulfillment of life's dreams. Thus the role of physical power is first priority. Hence, the necessity or requirement of worshipping Goddess **Durga** in the first instance. After acquiring physical strength or power one needs to have economic power for the maintenance and sustenance of the physical strength of the body without which one cannot exist. The worship of second power is also thus very essential simultaneously i.e. Goddess **Lakshmi**.

Overwhelmingly vast majority of humans are concerned with the acquisition of these two powers – Physical and Economic only. The people, who strive for third power i.e. intellectual are fewer and form lean minority. The seekers of spiritual power, which is sublimity of intellectual power are even lesser. Consequently worshippers of Goddesses **Durga** and **Lakshmi** constitute a very large and vast majority and far outnumber the followers or worshippers of **Saraswati**. However, it should not be inferred that the followers of Saraswati do not propitiate and adorn Goddesses Durga and Lakshmi. They too do without which they also cannot exist. You, therefore, find lesser numbers in pursuit of intellectual and spiritual activities.

It can safely and correctly be surmised that every human being on earth worships these three Goddesses. It is a different matter if many do not acknowledge it, but for all practical purposes who can deny that they do indulge in it, though do not concede it so openly and candidly as *Hindus* admit of doing it in the forms symbolized and sanctified by *Hinduism*. After all what does worship really mean. In actual matter of fact it means and implies constant and continuous thinking and

contemplation of, along with pursuit and desire to acquire, obtain or achieve a certain prowess, capability, object or a person.

Our sages and saints had also realized that eat, drink and be merry is not the only purpose of human birth on this planet, though they constitute the most important prior ingredients of a life. They determined that it is for a higher purpose and goal that souls are born as humans. It is to make progress in advancement towards Self/God realization for which one has to fulfill certain duties and adopt some definite procedures and methods. *Hinduism* is fundamentally based on monotheism believing in one sole Supreme Being. As it happens that natural tendencies of mind vastly differ from person to person and their degree of intellectual level and intelligent perception and comprehension also vary largely. In order to cater to such large variety of populace and to direct them towards the higher cherished goal of God awareness they devised polytheism as a first step to achieve that goal. With a view to satisfy diversified likes, tastes and leaning towards particular faculties and qualities of the Lord they created a pantheon of Gods and Goddesses to suit their natural inclination and instincts. To give them concrete forms to worship the sages visualized the shapes and figures of different deities according to their supposed qualities and functions. It naturally resulted into Idol worship and *Murti Puja* because none can visualize the formless Supreme Creator for purposes of concentration and meditation to start with. The Supreme Creator is eternal, unchanging and perfect wisdom (Gyan) whereas according to *Hindu* belief all Gods and Goddesses merge in Him at the time of *Mahay Pralaya* or Great Dissolution.

Out of many goddesses in the pantheon of *Hindu* Gods and Goddesses three stand distinct and are more popularly idolized and worshipped viz. **Kali** or **Durga**, **Lakshmi**, or **Shree** and

Saraswati, which are three aspects of Divine *Mother/Shakti*. Saraswati is embodiment of creative energy of **Brahma** the creator of the world.

One of the mythological stories about the birth of goddess Saraswati describes it to born of Brahma's body. Though it is allegorical, yet it is true in the sense that all knowledge and wisdom came out of the creator. She is pure *Satyatatva* or *Satya* element of *Prakirti*. The word **Saraswati** is made up of two *Sanskrit* words *Sar* (सार) and *Swa* (स्व). *Sar* means real substance or essence and *Swa* means one's own self implying thereby the knowledge of self or realization of self is the essence or substance or purpose of life on earth. Goddess Saraswati symbolizes personification of the divine knowledge and the incarnation of *Brahm Gyan*.

People have become totally adhered to and consumed by the exterior or external ceremonies, rites, rituals, traditions and customs only ignoring the real purpose or objective which is the inner practice of *Shabd Yog* through concentration and meditation on one's own *Isht* or deity of choice.

Our saints could foresee the degeneration and obliteration of the real purpose and object of devotion and worship. To keep us on track and to continuously remind us of the goal and right course they had introduced the *Aarti* of the deity with a burning lamp and blaring conch shell (shankh) as well as the tolling of the bells in the daily worship. But unfortunately that also became limited and restricted to a routine rite or ritual in our worship whether at home or in the temple. It is not certain that even the priests and religious people can explain the true meaning, significance, importance and implication of those rituals viz. *Aarti*, blaring of conch and ringing of bell.

When a person has attained a certain state of deep concentration and meditation called samadhi after a continued practice, he internally sees a light or jyoti like that of a flame or burning lamp and simultaneously can also hear the internal sound of a conch shell and bell. Lord is *Jyoti Swarup*. He is all light. He is self effulgent light of the Universe. Whole of the visible and invisible universes were created by sound and the only visible form of God is all expansive light. The lamp lighted in temple also reminds that each of us is part of that Supreme Jyoti or light. Both science and religion declare from the house-top that light is the source of sustenance of all living beings. To merge in that Divine light is the goal of spirituality and highest purpose of life. Seeing of light and hearing of sound of conch shell and bell internally is a definite sign of considerable spiritual achievement and growth. It was not in vain and only for enjoyment or outer or external music that these rituals were made integral part of the daily worship. It was to remind us of our spiritual goal every time we go before the Lord whether in temple or home.

The figure or image of **Saraswati** as visualized by *Rishis* is normally shown having four arms and hands seated or standing on the white lotus wearing white clothes. She holds a book in one hand and the rosary in the other. The remaining two hands are depicted as playing *Veena* a sophisticated variant of an Indian stringed musical instrument commonly known as sitar. *Swan* is considered vehicle of the Goddess. The white garments denote all purity without blemish, without an admixture or taint of base elements. Ordinarily also white color is a sign of purity, as it totally reflects back the white light and no portion of its spectrum is absorbed or retained. As such the divine knowledge represented by Saraswati is perfectly pure. The book in

one hand is a symbol of all kinds of knowledge and wisdom. Goddess Saraswati is deemed to be the depository of education and learning, performing arts and other creative activities. The rosary in another hand symbolizes and is indicative of spirituality, which leads one to realization of self and the Supreme Creator. The musical instrument denoted eternal sound that initiate the whole manifestation. The sound of celestial *Veena* awakens the soul with notes of sublime divine music. She bestows knowledge of *Nad* (naad) of *Vedas* or *Shabad* encouraging the devotee to practice *Shabad Yog* for the realization of the eternal truth.

The four hands represent *Mun* (मून्) or Mind, *Buddhi* (बुद्धि) or intellect, *Chit* (चित्) or thinking faculty or thinking mind stuff including feelings and sensations and *Ahankar* (अहंकार) or ego. All the four are essential and necessary to lead a normal life in this world. The white lotus indicates that all material as well as spiritual knowledge are rooted in the Lord, who is beyond any color or *Gunn* (गुण) and remains unattached and unaffected by His own creation, though the creation is dependant on Him for its existence. The Swan as a carrier or vehicle of **Saraswati** remind us that we should utilize our knowledge, intelligence and intellect with discrimination by its proper use like *Swan*, that is said to have the power to extract milk from a mixture of water and milk. The figure of Swan shown with several Gods and Goddess in their visualized images or figures always constantly remind us to copy and inculcate the special quality of discrimination of a swan in all our activities so that our actions culminate and result in the welfare and well being for all including ourselves. The idolatry prescribed in *Hindu* religion is to encourage and attract general public towards God, the Creator. It was and is meant for beginners and neo-initiates just

as a child is provided with educational toys, pictures and drawing of alphabets, slate and pencil etc. as aids towards education. *Murti* is also very essential for the purposes of concentration and meditation in the beginning. They are simple symbols to fix the mind in spiritual education but it is not the wherewithal and end all of such practice of *Dhyan Yoga*. One has to leave behind such aids in order to advance further. *Hinduism* leads the aspirants gradually from external material images to internal mental images and from there to one personal God and then on to the Impersonal, Absolute or Transcendental *Brahm* beyond *Sargun* and *Nirgun* aspects of it. For spiritual or religious advancement and growth one should and has to adopt internal meditation. After certain period or duration of external worship and devotion of *idol/Murti* or *Isht* of one's own choice one should start practicing internal worship, in other words meditation, for attainment of spiritual objective. To continue throughout life only in external exercises of rituals and rites, can hardly help in reaching the real goal. No one would like to sit in elementary class for the whole life, if one really wishes to be educated. Sitting in 1st grade shall not entitle him to be called even a literate person much less educated one. However, *Hindus* should introduce their young ones to the preliminary form of worship and encourage his or her spiritual appetite to be satisfied and thirst to know God/Truth to be quenched in due course. They should be made to participate in cultural events too.



11

LORD VISHNU

*J*n this world everything, including galaxies, has three phases of existence. First creation, appearance or generation, next comes growth, development, expansion, sustaining period, stability or maintenance which slowly and gradually experiences degeneration, degradation, decay and ultimately results in its breakup, disintegration, death or disappearance. Nothing escapes this wheel of change.

Thus, the creator of Supreme Being called **Brahm** has three main qualities, attributes or powers with regard to his manifestation. Hence manifestation consists of power of generation, power of operation, maintenance and sustenance and third power of disintegration, destruction or merger. As at the time of its total destruction or disintegration called *Pralaya* the whole creation whether visible or invisible merges back into its source, the Creator. The manifestation disappears. The literal meaning of *Pralaya* is merger. All the religions of the world acknowledge the three phases of existence. Even the English word God is formed by three letters. G stands for generator, O signifies the operator and D denotes the destroyer. As a matter of fact *Brahm or God is beyond any quality or gun*.

Our ancient rishis and sages having acknowledged these three attributes or powers of *Brahm* have classified them as three separate and distinct entities. Brahm's first subsidiary power of creation has been given the name **Brahma**. The power of sustenance is known as **Vishnu, Narain** or **Jagdish**. The merging or destroying power is designated as **Mahesh, Shankar, Mahadev, Rudra, Chander Shekhar** etc. Generally people call it as **Shiv** which is a misnomer and not accurate, though widely popular.

After enormous contemplation and consequent spiritual experience those saints also discovered that human body is a miniature replica of the universe. They said loudly i.e. whatever is in macrocosm the same is in microcosm.

The **Vishnu** of macrocosm provides energy for the sustenance, preservance, stability and maintenance of the whole visible and invisible universe to operate it or run it smoothly to keep it in balance and perfect order. Similarly, each human body has its own **Vishnu** for its health and good functioning. According to **Patanjali's Yoga** system there are seven main nerve centers or ganglions called *Chakra* or *Padams* meaning lotuses at certain psychoenergetic locations, providing energy to main organs of body from head to rectum for their proper functional activities. The fourth *Chakra* from the top is designated as *Manipuram* or *Vishnu Chakra*. *Manipuram* means city of jewels.

The *Yoga Chakra* means whirlpool or vortex with circular motion at different vibrations and roughly corresponds to relevant locations in the spinal cord. These are not physical but can be visualized and experienced by persons with developed extra-sensory perception or ESP. The *Vishnu Chakra* is situated

around the navel. It is supposed to control and regulate digestion and body temperature. A digestive function includes metabolic process taking place in stomach, liver, intestines and other auxiliary subroutine organs like pancreas, spleen, kidney etc. This region is depicted as upside down yellow lotus emitting vibrations and radiation of yellow colored light. When awakened this chakra gives spiritual perspective also.

In reality all natural forces or powers have no shape or form. Their figure have been devised in forms of different Gods and goddesses simply by visualization for purposes of inspiring faith and to give an object for contemplation, to meditate upon, worship or propitiation. As human is the best specimen of creation and is said to be created in the image of God himself, incorporating micro replica of total cosmos, it was realized by our *Rishis* that the best depiction of a deity or divine entity could be in human form particularly when each species of life like and loves and admires one of its own. So imaginary figure of all Gods and Goddesses represent exterior form of human body with provision of four arms and hands instead of two. The only exception is **Ganesh**, which is shown to have an elephant face. The presence of four arms of divine deities signifies their overall approach covering all directions and to act accordingly. Another special feature of all Gods and Goddesses is that all are presented young persons indicative of their agelessness and changelessness on account of their being divine, astral and spiritual entities without being affected by the wheel of time.

By collective figuration of the assembly of organs and sub-organs responsible for digestive functions as a whole – this region is designated as seat of **Bhagwan Vishnu**. Our religious leaders visualized the figure of Lord Vishnu in which he is ordinarily depicted as reclining and slumbering on **Shesh Nag** –

a multi-headed cobra with its hood spread over the deity swimming in *Ksheer Sagar* literally meaning ocean of milk – with **Lakshmi**, **Narad**, **Sanakadi**, etc. in attendance with folded hands (a symbol of obeisance) and God **Brahma** perched on a lotus connected with the naval of **Vishnu** in his visualized concept corroborates the presumption. Otherwise what other appropriate explanation can be?

The whole digestive function in our body is successfully completed by the heat in the abdomen by providing energy, without which nothing can be digested and assimilated, for sustenance of the body.



12

GODDESS LAKSHMI

*J*n Hindu mythology Goddess Lakshmi is described as consort of **Bhagwan Vishnu** one of the trinity of Hindu Gods, the main sub-powers of the creator of the universes the *Brahm* (ब्रह्म). Therefore, she is one of the most important and highly revered Goddess of the legion of Gods and Goddess.

An entity is known by its qualities, characteristics, attributes and prowess with the help of which it is described. A physically strong and powerful person like a wrestler is considered strong and powerful on the basis of his physical strength and power. A scholar is defined by his scholarship, great intelligence and intellect. A wealthy person is called wealthy because of his wealth and possessions. Similar is the case with other professions. A skilled person is he who has skills. So the real admiration, adulation or worship is founded on a particular achievement and excellence. Similarly, in case of **Bhagwan Vishnu** his power of sustenance, perseverance, development and maintenance is the real source of his godhood. In short all his powers can be summarized in one word “Prosperity”. Material prosperity on this earth is dependent on wealth or **Lakshmi**. Money is a

vehicle of all our activities and to a certain extent spiritual activity also has to lean on money, without which it may not be possible to search for and reach a spiritual teacher and mentor. People would not recognize Vishnu without his consort **Lakshmi**. Hence, who could be better than Lakshmi to fit the role of his consort in order to run this world. That is the reason for prevalent worship of Lakshmi more than even of **Bhagwan Vishnu** himself, though indirectly worship of Lakshmi is virtually worship of Bhagwan Vishnu.

Only *Hindus* worship Lord **Vishnu** but all the humanity worships **Lakshmi** without any distinction of caste, creed, ethnicity, religion, social status, age, sex, country, or region. No individual is exception in this regard. After all what is worship? Constant and continuous desire, thinking and actions to acquire a particular object or article is its worship. So who can deny being worshipper of Lakshmi. The only difference is that *Hindus* openly do it in temples and homes and also admit it, whereas the rest of the people on this earth actually participate in Lakshmi worship but refuse to admit it. What will you call it except sheer hypocrisy?

Hindu legend has said Goddess **Lakshmi** was revealed as one of the sixteen jewels recovered from churning of the ocean by Gods (देवता) and Demons (देव्य) together at the time of *Amrit Manthan* (अमृत मथन). After the appearance of Lakshmi as a result of that churning effort there ensued a struggle among all participants as to who shall marry her. Sensing trouble Lakshmi declared that she herself would select her own consort. All agreed and she selected **Bhagwan Vishnu** to be her Lord.

All consorts or spouses of the *Hindu* Gods are depicted as human females and all gods have been shown as human males.

Plausibly it may be due to the fact that no male God is complete in itself without a counterpart, because the universe is composed of two opposite and complimentary powers or forces; a positive and another negative, which also supplement each other as represented by male and female sexes in all living species.

As human beings is the best specimen of God's creation and is at its top, therefore, all Gods and Goddesses, symbolizing different energies and forces of nature, are depicted in human forms and figure in the absence of anything better in a physical body; whereas in actual reality no natural energy, power or force has any physical body or figure. Provision of an attractive figure also helps to contemplate, concentrate and meditate upon by the beginners during worship as it is much easier and convenient to focus attention on physical body than on an abstract one, which cannot be successfully imagined. In *Sanskrit* language the word *Devi* (देवी) is given female gender and *Shakti* (शक्ति) power or energy is also categorized as female, which all Goddesses are considered to be embodiment of .

According to *Hindu* scriptures **Lakshmi**, who is also known as **Shri**, has been visualized by sages as having face of a human female wearing a golden crown and jewelery around her neck. Her image has four arms and hands, wearing a red sari with gold embroidered border. Also there are two white elephants on her sides showering water on her. In one hand she hold a half-open lotus and in other a full bloomed lotus flower. Her left forehand is shown dropping gold coins, near which sits an owl and the fourth hand is in a blessing pose. She is seen either sitting or standing on a lotus. Her vehicle of transport is a centipede.

The crown and jewelery represent wealth and prosperity indirectly indicating high social status. Red colour of *Sari* means that prosperity or wealth is wrapped or is achieved as a result of intense activity and efforts. Golden border implies that there can be excessive material wealth and opulence too. It may be noted that wealth can be of different kinds; material, intellectual or spiritual treasures. Her four arms signify that all the four types of classes of human society every existing on this earth viz. intellectuals, skilled, professional workers, traders, farmers, and business merchants and also unskilled manual workers; are capable of acquiring prosperity by dint of hard work and efforts. A lotus is never smeared by marsh or mud in which its roots lie. Lotuses in hand point out that one should live like lotus even after getting wealthy and rich and should remain away and detached from the ill effects of opulence and riches, though worldly means have to be adopted for earning wealth and consequent comforts of life. Her left hand dropping coins is self-explanatory and needs no further elaboration. The presence of an owl signifies and reminds that a rich and affluent person though being wise and intelligent, which owl is also considered to be, becomes blind to realities and vagaries of life just as owl cannot see in daylight. It is also indicative that excess riches can only be acquired by the adoption by means, which are not fit to see daylight or open to scrutiny.

The hand in the blessing pose communicates that Goddess showers her blessings on each and everyone without any discrimination, who worships her, which in the real world means intense desire for and earnest efforts to create and earn wealth and money. The presence of the two white elephants showering water on Goddess implies that both name and fame are concomitant to and companions of wealth and riches, which in the

long run are liabilities and perform no useful purpose and service like white elephants, who are just for show purpose and enhance or balloon false ego and vanity of whoever owns them. The centipede as the carrier of Lakshmi reminds us of pitfalls and maleffects of excessive wealth and affluence, which it brings in its wake, if allowed to prevail unbridled. The excessive wealth generally breeds extra greed, which can result in weakening of moral fiber and righteous values degenerating into heightened selfishness and other undesirable consequences, that sting like centipede with multiple legs.

Hindus have set aside a period for worship of Goddess **Lakshmi**. The celebrations last for almost five consecutive days encompassing both the luminous and the non-luminous fortnights (शुक्ल पक्ष तथा कृष्ण पक्ष) in the month of *Kartik* of the Indian Lunar calendar. The climax or the main function of the festivities falls on *Amavash* (अमावश) or no-moon's day in that month on the eve of new moon ushering in new light or brightness signifying prosperity in the ensuing new year. Lakshmi is worshipped individually and collectively in every *Hindu* home, temples and community centers to welcome prosperity of all. The day is also consecrated and marked as victory of good over evil or truth over falsehood or light over darkness by illuminations all over in home, cities, towns and villages. This day is called *Deepavali* or *Diwali*. The return and coronation of **Bhagwan Rama** in Ayodhya on that day after defeating **Ravana**, the king of *Lanka*, provides an added significance to *Deepavali* or *Diwali*.

Greed in itself is not totally undesirable. In this world the greatest motivating force is money in all walks of life and related activity including attainment and preaching of spirituality and practice of religion. Money is the means to almost every

thing material in this world, but it also cannot buy many things like love, affection etc. Money is needed throughout life right from prenatal to postdeath rites. None without exception can avoid use of money while living. God has not given us greed in vain without a useful purpose. Thus, up to a certain degree, extent and limits greed is beneficial and is very essential to keep the world going and running smoothly for which Lord **Vishnu** has been given the command. One cannot look after the well being and protects interests of one's family and one self without the natural instinct and attributes of greed. It, however, becomes injurious and harmful when the boundary of honesty and decency is crossed. Sky is the limit of greed. It becomes oppressive when dishonest, illegal and fraudulent means are adopted to satisfy one's greed.

According to *Mahabharata* when **Pandavas** and **Draupadi** were in exile to forests for twelve years after having lost their kingdom in gambling to **Duryodhana**, they became very thirsty one day. They were wandering in the search for water and came across a spring of fresh water. The spring was the property of **Yaksh** (यक्ष) a tribal chief who guarded it. When **Sahdev** was sent to fetch water and approached the spring with the intention to obtain water the Yaksh appeared and forbade him to have access to water unless he gave satisfactory answers to four questions of Yaksh. Sahdev requested him to ask his question. The Yaksh asked:

“क्या न पावक में जले? क्या काल न खाये?

क्या न विद्या कब झके? क्या न अमृत झमाय?”

The questions were originally in *Sanskrit*, the prevalent language then. Their English rendering could be as, “*What is not burnt in fire, what is which time cannot destroy or*

annihilate, which is beyond the powers of a woman and what cannot be drowned or submerged in the ocean.” **Sahdev** could not give replies satisfactory to yaksh and returned back. He reported the matter to his brother. Then each of **Nakul, Arjun, Bhim** and **Draupadi** came turn by turn and tried their luck. No one could provide answers satisfactory to **Yaksh**. Finally, **Yudhishter** arrived and same questions were repeated to him. Yudhister replied as follows:

“**कथ्य न पावक मे जले, धर्म काल न खाये।**
पुत्र न विद्या जन अके, लोक न अनुंद अमाय।”

The English translation would be that, “*Truth can not be burnt or destroyed by fire. Dharma does not vanish or disappear with time i.e. Dharma continues irrespective of time. A woman alone (without a union with a man) can not give birth to a son and greed can not be drowned in the ocean, however deep it may be*”. The **Yaksh** was satisfied by his apt replies and allowed access to the spring. The important lesson is that greed is limitless. So what should be the confines of greed to lead a good and comfortable life.

For a reasonable and comfortable living in this world an ancient sage devised a formula which when translated in Hindi is compressed in the following verse:

“**ईश्वर इतना धीजियें जामें कुटुम्ब अमाये**
मैं श्री भूखा न बहूँ और काष्ठ न शूखा जाय।”

His prayer to God is to provide him as much wealth or resources by which he and his family could lead a reasonable comfortable life and that he could also serve and help guest and others. Contentment is the antidote of greed and can keep it in

check. Every individual has his own requirements, needs and responsibilities, which can differ from person to person depending on the circumstances he is placed in by the nature. So after earning enough to cater to his legitimate demands and to discharge his duties also, with the provision for old age as well as health of himself and his dependents, he should feel contented and abstain from indulging in extra greed.

All the history of the world stands as a witness that most of the wars; conquests and struggles were caused mainly due to disproportionate and undesirable greed. The leaders of politics, trade, industry, finance, economic and social fields in the world should ensure that the greed and exploitation of all kinds of world resources even humans remain within the confines of restraint and moderation in order to pre-empt any future upheaval and to encourage harmony and peace throughout. Moderation in greed is the golden principle. This is the real worship of Goddess **Lakshmi** in which every individual human being is engaged per force for living in this world having no other choice.



13

GANESH

*W*hat does the word **Ganesh** means? It is composed of two words *Gan*(गण) and *Ish*(ईश). According to *Bhargav Adarsh Dictionary* and *Brahat Hindi Kosh* the word *Gan* means समूह, द्वेर, श्रेणी, वर्ग, संघ, अनूचर, अनुयायी, अक्षहोनी का एक विभाग, कोटी, etc. In English their translation would be group, community, grade or class, assembly, gathering, tribe, clan or even a nation and follower, agent a section of an army. *Ish* means पति, नायक, प्रधान, राजा, स्वामी, नेता, बड़ा, अधिकार्युक्त, etc. The English translation would be head, commander, president, master, leader, higher entity, king, ruler and an authority. Taking two words together the indication will be that **Ganesh** means a ruler or chief of clan, tribe or community; leader of a nation; head of a religious, political or administrative authority or entity; president of a republic or democratic government like gantantr; commander of an army or police or para military organization or head of a section or unit of such an organization or institution.

Ganesh is also named **Vinayak**. In *Mahabharata* the duty of Ganeshwar or Vinayak was to inspect, supervise and direct human activities relating to both civil and military affairs.

In military parlance the term refers to a certain rank and position. It thereby suggests that the status of Vinayak was of a commander or controller or head of a unit in the armed forces. The word Ganesh never implied as divine entity.

There is no mention of word **Ganesh** in *Vedic* literature. The use of **Ganpati** is found in only one mantra of *Rig Veda*.

“गणनांत्वा गणपति हृषामहे कपि कपीना मुप श्रवक्तनम्।”

Ganpati simply means the head of *Ganas*. In addition the word Ganpati has been used at several places in *Yajur Veda* also. The Vedic literature is bereft of word Ganesh or Lord Ganesh or God Ganesh. The induction of Ganesh as a God is not sanctified by the Vedic scriptures or Vedic religious rites and practices. It seems to be later development of post-Vedic era.

The legends weaved around **Ganesh**'s birth, marriage etc. were manufactured to establish his divine origin and possessor of certain supernatural powers similar to generally those qualities which are associated with other Gods and Goddesses.

The *Vedic* and later *Vedic* periods date back to 6000-300 BC. Some authorities differ on the dates and assign this period to much earlier times. The latest research by **Dr. B.G. Siddharatha**, Director General, Birla Research Institute, Hyderabad, India based on astronomical calculations or movements of clusters of *Stars* or *Nakshetras* – The most reliable natural measure of time– has placed the origin of *Rig Veda* as far back as more than 10,000 years before Christian era and creation of earliest *Aitrya Barhman* as 6,000 years BC. (*Brahmans* are expository texts in *Veds* and should not be confused with *Brahmin* caste or community at large).

The stories about **Ganesh**'s birth etc are found in several *Purans*, such as **Shiv** and *Brahmand Purans*, which are considered to have been compiled during the period of 300- 1500 AD. *Purans* are semi-religio-historic literature. The existence of legends about Ganesh in such *Purans* suggests that Ganesh was introduced as a God much much later than *Vedic* and later *Vedic* periods. *Purans* are not even *Vedangs*. The philosophical six *Sutras* including **Patanjali's** *Yoga Sutra* were interpreted near about *Pauranic* period. According to *Matasya Puran*, **Gajvadan** was appointed *Ganpati* or head of *Gans* of Shivji which included animals, birds, reptiles, insects and amphibians. Still he was not called Ganesh the God.

Historians, thinkers and theoreticians differ about the period of **Ganesh**'s worship as God. Some of them are of the opinion that Lord Ganesha was introduced in the pantheon of *Hindu* Gods around Gupta period of recorded Indian history. Other like thinker **Bhandarkar** say that Ganesh or Ganpati worship materialized between 5th and 8th centuries AD. They base their conclusions on the premise that there is no reference of Ganpati or its worshippers in the literature produced during *Gupta* period.

Hindus have the propensity to create new divinities or deities. Some example will illustrate the point. There was no such Goddess known as **Santoshi Mata**. It was invented about 30 – 40 years ago by some zealots, probably to garner funds and prosper financially. To make it look more authentic a fast on Friday banishing use of sour articles from the food was prescribed. In due course it spread through out India and abroad mainly among ladies. A new image of the Goddess was invented and propagated. Even the films were made eulogizing the powers of the new Goddess.

There was no real God known as **Hanuman** till late after the times of Lord **Rama's** incarnation. In 9th century AD, **Adi Shankracharya** successfully carried out religious and social struggle against corrupt and depraved *Buddhist* monks in particular and against the corruption crept in degenerating Buddhism in general. He succeeded in virtually turning Buddhism out of India. After many many years and at a certain point of time in history Lord **Buddha** was incorporated in *Hinduism* as the ninth incarnation of **Bhagwan Vishnu** – may be for the sake of unity of Indian public by placating remnants of followers of Buddhism and integrating those erstwhile Buddhists into the *Hindu* society. However it further proves, the tendency or proclivity of *Hindus* to create new gods when *Hindu* religious heads and leaders felt the necessity of doing so for one reason or the other. Such appears to be the case of canonizing **Ganesh** also as a god which never existed earlier in the legion of *Hindu* Gods.

It is a further corroborated by the fact that not only a few Gods but also nine astrological planets including sun were included as semi-divinities, which are now propitiated or worshipped at the time of *Hindu Sanatanis Sanskars* and religious functions performed. So much so that their idols have been placed in temples for regular worship. In some localities separate shrines have cropped up for idolizing those planets.

According to **Patanjali's** *Yoga* system there are six energy centers in the human body, of which last and lowest is *Mul Dhara Chakra* in the rectum where *Kundalni Shakti* or power happens to be residing in slumbering state and in *Yogic* meditation efforts are made to awaken that *Shakti*.

It is a subject of speculation that probably at some much later times when different gods were assigned lordships of those energy centers or *Charkas*, the lordship of the lowest *Chakra* was accorded to **Ganesh**. When that happened is shrouded in mystery. For any reason the inclusion of Ganesh as a deity is obscure and one cannot pin points its origin and induction with certain degree of certainty, though at present propitiation of Ganesh at the beginning of every sanatnist religious function and *Sanskar* is almost universal and he is worshipped without any questions being asked.

The characteristics of lowest *Mul Dhara Chakra* is solidity, where after all metabolic activity the rejected matter by the body is excreted with the help of the energy located there. According to the story relating to the birth of **Ganesh**, he was created by Goddess **Parvati** or **Uma** out of the dirt of her body. This supports the view that Ganesh is supposed to be the Lord of *Mul Dhara Chakra* responsible for throwing out refuse of the human body.

It would be reasonably consistent to say that on account of solidity characteristic of *Mul Dhara Chakra* that **Ganesh** is symbolically represented by a lump of soil or a clod of earth, when no idol of Ganesh is available for purposes of performance of religious ceremonies at *Hindu Sanatanist* functions or *Pujas*.

There came a time in human history when the divine right of king was established and accepted by almost all nations in the world. How it happened, no one exactly knows. Presumably first the cronies and sycophants of king or a ruler initiated it in order to curry favours with the monarch and later might have been copied by others thereby resulting in its recognition and

acceptance by public at large. The establishment and achievement of unity among the subjects of a ruler might have been a prime motive to start with.

Hindus at certain point of time might have elevated, may be inadvertently or intentionally, the status of a ruler to that of a deity. Consequently head of a state or government defined as **Ganeshan** or **Ganpati** transformed into a God and gained wide recognition and acceptance with the passage of time. It looks that several factors were involved over a period for the proclamation of Ganesh as a deity or God.

To my mind **Ganesh** symbolizes an ideal or perfect ruler. If one looks at the imaginary figure of Ganesh, which is now prevalent, all its qualities and attributes conform to the desired standard which a perfect representative or governor or head of a state should possess for efficient control of government and competent discharge of his duties in matters of a state or government.

An elephant has the biggest head of all the animals including humans. The imposition of head of an elephant signifies that a ruler should have a big head euphemistically indicating great brainpower including wisdom, understanding, capacity to think great, contemplate with discriminating intellect. It is also a symbol of high intelligence as an elephant is considered to be very intelligent. **Ganesh** is also called Gajanan which literally means having eyes of an elephant or a cobra, which are deceptive. Two small eyes as compared to such a large head imply that head of a state should have everything under his eyes or within his sight, though he may not appear to see or know much. Two large ears indicate that a ruler should be prone to listen and assimilate all points of view even dissidence and opposing and

contradictory opinions with the proviso, that his mouth should be hidden, small and shut suggesting thereby that he should be frugal in speech, saying and revealing the least, discreet in his utterances and expressions giving out precisely only that much of his mind, which is essential and necessary for a particular occasion, event and time.

There is a proverb “हाथी के दांत खाने और तथा दिखाने के और”. Long exterior tusks represent that a ruler’s prestige and punishing powers should be awesome, frightening and extensive for criminals and wrong doers. Inner smaller teeth point out that he should utilize minimum of taxpayers fund for his personal upkeep and maintenance.

The long trunk is indicative of his power to smell things in advance and to anticipate events as a visionary and should have wide operating range. Four hands symbolize his capability and capacity to act in all directions. The symbolic weapons and articles like a lotus flower, sweets, rope and axe suggest that a ruler should utilize all the four pillars of politics viz. *Sam* (साम), *Dam* (दाम), *Bhed* (भेद) and *Dand* (डंड) respectively. In English these can be translated as:

- Negotiations, discussions and persuasion
- Rewards, incentives, facilities, concessions etc.
- Secret activities, intelligence gathering, espionage and sabotage. And finally,
- Use of force and punishment respectively to achieve political success in the objectives of state of kingdom.

Figure of **Ganesh** shows a big belly on account of which he is called *Lambodar* (लम्बोदर) also. Such a big belly suggests that a

ruler should have capacity and ability to digest all sorts of views and opinions including opposite ones, should have capability to store lot of information and data relating to administrative and government affairs.

It appears quite intriguing and mysterious that an entity so huge as **Ganesh**'s personality should be assigned a mouse as its vehicle of transport. However, it becomes quite clear and justified when one realizes that a ruler should move at a considered speed and should take calculated, measured but brisk steps to conduct affairs of state or governance. Further, it may be remembered that most important work and functions of a government relate to security, safety and stability of a state and has to be accomplished through covert, underground, secret and out of sight activities including espionage, intelligence gathering, sabotage and deceptions.

The mouse always acts underground, out of sight, and secretly nibbling on useful and important articles in the dark. Its underground passages and tunnels hollow out the ground and foundations, which crumble down when sufficiently open and overt pressure is applied in the interests of security and safety of the kingdom, though on surface it may appear to be normal superficially without any suspicion of abnormal conditions. **Ganesh** is also known as bestower of boons called *Riddhi* (ऋद्धि) measuring wealth or prosperity and *Siddhi* (सिद्धि) perfection, success, versatility, competence, mastery in avocation, learning etc. A good ruler too can provide all facilitates and resources to help achieve both *Riddhi* and *Siddhi*.

Everybody's first act in the morning is to answer nature's call. If one's bowel are regular, smooth and normal one invariably keeps healthy and fit. The works undertaken by a healthy and

sane person would result in success and achievement in the form of wealth, learning/acquisition of different skills, fine arts etc. provided he or she works hard intelligently and with single mindedness. In other words he acquires *Riddhi* and *Siddhi*. So in an indirect way **Ganesh**, considered lord of **Mul Dhara Chakra**, can be credited as bestower of these boons.

Ganesh is also known as **Vighna Vinashak** (विघ्न विनाशक) i.e. remover of obstacles and hindrances. The element of fear of obstacles seems to have been injected in Ganesh worship is just to provide extra-added significance and importance to the deity. No one wants to have obstacles and hinderances in one's life in general and particularly at happy occasions and ceremonies connected with it. May be this can be a reason for people to propitiate Lord Ganesh just at the start of every religious function or social event in order to eliminate happenings of an awkward situation.

An experienced and efficient ruler or head of a government can also help remove obstacles in the progress and advancement of his subjects or ruled public through various means and resources at his disposal for patronization and grant of boons. Fear and rewards are two important factors for human loyalty, respect and admiration of a God or a ruler or superior.

In Maharashtra worship of **Ganesh** is very popular and common now a days. It was started by a great, learned and recognized freedom fighter of early twentieth century in India. His name was **Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak**. He popularized Ganesh worship for awakening of *Hindu* masses and their participation in freedom struggle in the name of religion as a cover for such activities. The tradition of Ganesh worship continues even now and *Ganesh Chaturthi* the supposed birthday of Ganesh is

celebration with great fanfare and gusto. However, these celebrations have now become more or less commercialized.

The priestly class and religious figures presiding at different religious and social functions have developed a vested interest in perpetuating the worship of **Ganesh** to serve the aim of earning their livelihood by exploiting ignorance of *Hindu* masses generally.



14

MAKAR SANKRANT

*W*hat is *Makar Sankrant*? It consists of two words *Makar* and *Sakrant*. Word ‘Makar’ is a term used in Indian astrology. In other parts of world it is called Capricorn. We see the Sun traversing the sky daily. The apparent or observed path of the Sun’s travel in the sky as seen from earth is called Zodiac. It is circular but more appropriately elliptic in shape. Therefore, it is called elliptic also. Sun completes one round of the Zodiac or elliptic in 360 days. It has, therefore, been assigned 360 degrees and is divided in twelve imaginary segments. Each segment or division comprises of 30 degrees or *Ansh* in Indian astrology. In Indian astronomy each segment is termed as *Rashi*. *Makar* or Capricorn is the tenth *Rashi* of the Zodiac. Annually it is entered by the Sun on 14th January and covers it during the period from 14th January to 13th February.

The second word ‘*Sankrant*’ has its roots in *Sankrit* word *Sankaran* (संकरण) which means motion or movement. *Sankaran* plus *Unt* (अंत) meaning end, makes *Sankrant*. So *Sankrant* is defined as the point of time when the Sun ends its motion in one *Rashi* and enters the next. It can happened during the day as well as night, but in practice it is celebrated during the daytime. Hence, there are twelve *Sankrants* in a year. On the basis of these

twelve *Rashis* or transitions one year is composed of twelve months and each day of month means one degree or one ansh journey of Sun. Therefore, *Makar Sankrant* is point of time when sun appears to have entered the tenth segment of the elliptic i.e. *Makar* or Capricorn. *Makar Sankrant* has not been fixed at random or haphazard way, but is based on the solid calculations of astral phenomena, which are eternal for us till the earth lasts.

According to **Dr. B.G. Sidharth**, Director General of B. M. Birla Science Center at Calcutta the astronomical traditions of India can be traced before 10,000 before Christ as tumbled out of *Vedic* literature. *Brahmins* are expository texts in *Vedas*, which should not be confused with *Brahmin* caste or community at large. As per **Dr. Sidharth** one of the earliest *Brahmins* called *Aitrya Brahmin* written 6,000 years before Christ points out that *Nakshetra Punar Vasu* (पुनरवासू) resided over the Deity *Aditi* was exactly at the east point at that time. Similarly, the latest of the *Brahmins* called *Stapta* (स्तप्त) refers to *Nakshetra Kritika* (क्रितिका) at the east point which is about 2300 years before Christ. Thus the claim of western scholars that the astronomy originated with Greeks is not correct and not substantiated by our *Vedic* literature. The Greek civilization originated much later than 2,300 BC; when our last *Brahmin* was written. The destruction of Troy as immortalized by Greek poet **Homer** in *Iliad* was composed only 700 years before Christ. According to western historians the alphabet writing in Greece began around 780 BC., which may be considered as start of Greek civilization, and is therefore, in no case earlier than 800 before Christ. Hence, *Vedic* or Indian astronomy and astrology are very-very ancient.

In India, there are six seasons or *Ritus* of two months each, whereas in other parts of the world only four seasons each of

three months duration are prevalent. In India these are *Vasant*, *Grisham*, *Varsha*, *Sharad*, *Hemant* and *Shishir*. The period from 15th of November to 13th January is termed as *Shishir*. It comprises of two months of *Margshirsh* (मार्गशीर्ष) or *Mangsr* and *Paush* or *poh* [पोह] in Hindi calendar year. These are two months of cold weather but *Paush* or *Poh* is the coldest. The next month is *Magh* i.e. the starting time of *Vasant ritu*, though in actual practice *Vasant* is counted from *Vasant Panchmi* or *Shri Panchmi*; which was on 24th January in 1996.

Most of India lives in villages and people in rural areas generally take bath in rivers, rivulets, or torrents called *Nadis* or on village wells. During the month of *Poh* people are forbidden to take outside in *Nadis* etc, due to intense cold particularly in the *Paush* or *Poh*, The bathing nadis again starts on *Makar Sankrant* as warmer days follow. It is hence an important date in *Hindu* calendar due to medical and health reasons.

We *Hindu* generally celebrate marriages on auspicious days called *Mahurat* according to favourable position of main planets and Sun on those days. As such normally no *Hindu* marriage is performed during the month of *Poh*. However, their celebration starts again from *Makar Sankrant*. It is the second importance and significance of *Makar Sankrant* from the social angle.

India's economy from time immemorial has been agrarian including cattle farming. **Dr. B.G. Sidharatha** has stated that the word *Arya* of *Rig Veda* is derived from *Sanskrit* root which means plough, which indicates that the *Aryans* represent the very first agricultural people from the dawn of civilization rather than an ethnic group as claimed and propagated by the west. Hence, it is wrong and improper to deduce that *Aryans* came to India from somewhere in Central Asia. It was noticed and pointed out by **Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak** also.

Being an agricultural country depending on agrarian economy the sowing and harvesting of crops has been granted prominence and most important place in *Hindu* thought. It is so in other parts of world also. The *Hindu Parvs* are mostly linked to such events in a calendar year. In India by the middle of *Paus* month sowing of all winter crops are completed even now. At the time of *Makar Sankrant* those crops get properly established in the soil indicating a bountiful harvest later. As the weather gets warmer and warmer after *Makar Sankrant* the chances of successful crops are assured. Particularly rape, sunflower and other oil seed are in full bloom by that date. So the farmers in particular and nation as a whole in general feel optimistic about the economy of the year to follow, though crops mature later and harvesting starts after Holi which in itself is a big important festival throughout the country as per *Hindu* culture. If one happens to go out in the fields at that time one's heart would be gladdened by the charming view of yellow flowers and the sweet smell around. So they rejoice by observing *Makar Sankrant* as one of the important event or *Parv*. This is economic and financial significance of *Makar Sankrant*.

In *Hindu* scriptures, it is mentioned that a person who dies, when Sun is *Utrayan*, goes direct to *Swarg* or paradise. Those who die, when sun is *Dakshinayan* have to take rebirth and are not freed of *Avagaman* (आवागमन). A case in point is of **Bhisham Pitamah** of *Mahabharata*. He was the greatest *Brahmchari* or celebate of all times. The *mahayudh* of *Mahabharata* was fought and ended during the month of *Asauj* or *Kuanr*. At that time Sun was *Dakshinayan*. *Utrayan* means the period when sun shines in greater intensity and for longer hours of the day-time northern hemisphere of earth and *Dakshinayan* implies the period when Sun's intensity is greater and shines for longer hours of daytime on the southern hemisphere. When the war

was over the *Pitamah* was lying injured and penetrated throughout his body by the arrows shot by **Arjun**. By dint and virtue of his *Brahmcharya* or celibacy **Bhisham** had acquired the power to die at a particular time of his own choosing. Lying in sort of bed of arrows or *Ban Shayya* he willed that he would depart from this world when the sun would become Utrayan. As such he left his body after *Makar Sankrant*. This is religious cum spiritual significance of *Makar Sankrant*.

In India it is almost universal practice based on medico-scientific reasons to make *Laddoos* of wheat *Flour* or *Besan* or *Dal* during the months of winter to provide greater energy through extra consumption of proteins and carbohydrates including sugar and starch to fight the rigors of winter. In winter one has naturally greater appetite than summer. During these months you will find nation at large eating *Rewari*, *Til bhugga*, *Gazak* and even *Laddoos* made of *Til* or sesame seeds to face the extreme cold. On the day of *Makar Sankrant* the *Laddoos* of *Til* are specially prepared and distributed to poor people along with uncooked *Khichri*. Ladies also give bayanas to their elders as a mark of respect and affection. The custom of preparation of *Til* confectionary on *Makar Sankrant's* day implies that it should be considered as end of consuming *Til* preparations. In preparation of *Laddoos* of different kinds, generally *Ghee* or butter is used. These animal fats contain high percentage of saturated fats, consumption of which increases the level of cholesterol in the body and is harmful to the heart. Further ladies and confectioners (halwais) use *Til* oil as *Maun* (मौन) in Mathis and other preparations of *Maida* (मीदा) to make them soft or khasta before deep frying. In nineteen eighties **Dr. Lakshmi** the then head of cardiology department in All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi conducted research on *Til* oil. Her findings were that *Til* oil consumption reduced the level of cholesterol. Perhaps our forefathers practicing *Ayurvedic*

system of medicine were aware of some beneficial effects of sesame or til that they introduced consumption of *Til* in different forms especially during winter; when public in general had higher and extra-intake of saturated fats; to counter its harmful and injurious effects to heart.

Before ending it would be befitting to quote Mark Twain for the information and benefit of our young boys and girls in particular, who have been brought up here and had little chance to learn about the history, literature, civilization, culture, philosophy and religious thoughts of India. I quote:

“India land of dreams and romance; the country of hundred tongue, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of human race, birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grand mother of legends, great-grand mother of tradition, the land that all men desire to see and having seen once by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all the rest of globe combined.”

It is how an American writer and scholar admires India. Such is the grandeur and beauty of our motherland India and we should be proud to be Indians inheriting that great heritage.

The above described factors were the basis for the celebration of *Makar Sankrant parv*, which was introduced as a part of *Hindu Dharma* and which was very enthusiastically adopted and actually practiced in life by *Hindu* en masse. With advancement of human knowledge and development of science and technology which spread throughout the world the modern times have become an era of reason and logic replacing faith and tradition. Now even a child asks why?



15

BASANT PANCHMI

Basant is one of the six seasons prevalent in India. It is the start of the year. Everywhere in the world advent of *Basant* or spring is celebrated in one form or the other. In many countries there are only four seasons in a year. According to astronomy it begins with the apparent entry of our sun in sign Capricorn or *Makar* (मकर) the tenth accepted sign of the Zodiac. It is nothing but a spring festival observed universally.

In India *Basant* is generally celebrated on 20th day of the month of *Magh* of Indian Lunar calendar i.e. on the 5th day of the second half of the month of *Magh* known as *Panchmi* of *Shukal Paksh* or luminous fortnight. Therefore it is famous as **Basant Panchmi**. Some call it **Shri Panchmi** also, as it is considered harbinger of prosperity for the coming year. This auspicious day is also regarded as birthday of Goddess **Saraswati**, which is considered as personification of imaginative and creative inspiration, learning, attainment and self expression representing finer, aesthetic higher qualities including spiritual one of the Mind.

At that point of time sunshine begins to increase and getting warmer which helps in growth of all types of vegetation and crops sown during winter season. The crops and flora start blooming. New leaves appear providing color to the environment. The prominent hue is yellow in general and particularly of oil seeds like mustard, rape, toria, tarameera etc. One sees nature smiling with prospects of rich harvest. India is mostly an agricultural country and of farm land. More than seventy percent of Indians live in rural areas, where economy is totally dependent upon agriculture. The good or bad harvest of crops directly impinges upon and affects other sectors of Indian economy and life also.

Yellow color is associated with apparel of Gods and Goddesses also. The *Pitamber* (पीताम्बर) yellow cloth adorned by **Bhagwan Vishnu** symbolizes light of *Vishnu Lok* and the apparent color of Sun which is source of all life and sustenance on earth. Many *Mahatmas*, *Sadhus* and *Sanyasis* including some *Shankaracharyas* wear yellow colored clothes which represents purity and sentiment of warmth towards all living beings. It indicates spirituality also. In tune with the color of the season and crops all around rural people wear yellow colored clothes. At least a cap or turban or a sari or blouse, even a handkerchief, if nothing, else is worn, to celebrate the gay of spirit of the festival. Yellow coloured rice and sweets are part taken of. The festival is celebrated irrespective of caste, colour or religious faith and is a secular one. It is also customary to fly kites on that day in many parts of India and hold kite flying competitions with kites of different shapes and sizes and color. Even in California U.S.A. kite flying competitions are held.

The martyrdom of a *Hindu* boy of eight years at the behest of some *Muslim* religious fanatics in the middle of 17th century

AD. has added significance to the day for *Hindus*. It happened during the reign of the 5th Mughal King **Shah Jahan** in a town called Baghbanpura, a suburb of present Lahore in Punjab province of Pakistan near the famous Shalimar Garden built by Shah Jahan.

A *Kshatri* or *Khatri* trader named **Bhag Mal** lived in Baghbanpura with his family. He has an eight year old son named *Haqiquat Rai* (हकीकत राय). In those times of *Muslims* rule there used to be elementary schools called *Maktab* (मक्तब) where Persian, Arabic and Urdu was taught by a primary teacher, normally a Muslim. Haqiquat Rai was also studying in such a rural school along with other *Muslim* and *Hindu* students. One day when the teacher in charge was not present in the class some students began talking about religion. A Muslim boy uttered some derogatory remarks about Goddess *Durga*. Haqiquat Rai retorted to the effect that how the Muslim boy would feel if the same remarks are attributed to **Bibi Fatima** the daughter of *Muslim* Prophet **Mohammed**. When the teacher arrived the *Muslim* boy reported and narrated the matter to the teacher, a *Mullah*, complaining that Haqiquat Rai insulted the Prophet and his daughter. The incident became a talk of the town and ultimately the matter was brought to the notice of *Qazi* of Lahore. A *Qazi* used to be a magistrate cum Judge for all criminals, civil, political and religious issues. The *Qazi* held a summary trial by summoning Haqiquat Rai and his father and pronounced that it was an act of blasphemy deserving penalty of death. However, he also adjudged that life of Haqiquat Rai could be spared if he gets converted to *Islam*. Haqiquat Rai had very staunch views about his own religion *Hinduism* and considered himself to be not guilty of any crime of blasphemy as he had simply pointed out unjustified and irresponsible

remarks of a *Muslim* boy. He emphatically rejected the offer of conversion to *Islam*.

Next day *Haqiquat Rai* was brought to the town square where large number of spectators and concerned public had gathered to witness the lopsided justice tantamount to persecution in the name of religion. *Haqiquat Rai* was in chains. He was again asked if he was prepared to renounce *Hinduism* and embrace *Islam*, which he definitely and stoutly refused to do. Then the little boy of eight was beheaded by sword on the orders of *Qazi* in full public gaze including his own father. He paid extreme price sacrificing his own life in the cause of *Hinduism* and righteousness. His body was allowed to be taken away by his father. He was cremated and his ashes were enshrined in a *Samadhi* in Baghbanpura to commemorate his martyrdom. Since then every year on *Basant Panchmi* day people gather at the *Samadhi* in his memory and his ultimate supreme sacrifice. I have attended one such function in 1945 when I was in Lahore. The *Samadhi* existed till partition of India in 1947 as one of the holy shrines of *Hindus*. It is an actual fact of history and not a fiction or figment of imagination. I do not know whether the *Samadhi* exists or not now.

Soon after the execution of *Haqiquat Rai*, the king **Shah Jahan** happened to come to Lahore on tour. There the provincial ruler and the qazi narrated with pride the whole episode to the king. Shah Jahan was outraged but suppressed his anger outwardly. He superficially praised them and asked that all concerned mullahs who had complained about the incident and had pleaded and touted the execution of the child to the *Qazi*, the teacher concerned and the *Qazi* should present themselves next day before the king for the reward in the service of *Islam*. All concerned happily gathered next day as ordered. He told the

assembly that they would be carried by boat to the tomb of king' father **Jahangir**, who is famous in history for justice, for awarding the rewards. The tomb still exists across the river *Ravi* from Lahore proper. In those days, river *Ravi* used to flow at the foot of Lahore fort. Now it flows three miles away towards west of the city near the town of *Shahdara*.

All concerned were embarked in a big boat and rowers began rowing it across the river. It was a rainy season and the river was in spate and in full fury with huge turbulent waves. When the boat reached in midstream the rowers under strict secret instructions of the king intentionally overturned the boat. All were drowned and the bodies were carried away by the swift current of water except the boatmen, who were expert swimmers and swam across the bank of the river.

This was quick and appropriate retribution of God and the King for the reprehensible murder of an innocent child in the name of the religion by unscrupulous and brute religious fanatics.

The memory of the martyr child will live forever associated with **Basant Panchmi**.



16

SHIV RATRI

*T*oday's topic of discussion is *Shiv Ratri* and *Shiv Vrat*. The question arises what is **Shiv** or who is **Shiv** before we talk about *Shiv Ratri* and *Shiv Vrat*. *Shiv* only means *Kalyan* or betterment, *Shubh* or auspicious, *Sudhar* or reform and *Unnati* or progress. Only the creator of this universe can do all this to our world. In *Hindu* philosophical thought and religion the creator is called *Brahm* (ब्रह्म). *Brahm* is a sankrit word consisting of 'ब्र' and 'मण'. *Brah* (ब्र) means to expand, increase, grow or progress, etc. and *mun* (मण) stands for which does *mannan* (मनन), the power to think or thought power. When a thing expands, increases or grows or progresses, it in simple term implies creation of something new. This expansion or creation exists or maintain for a certain period of time. In other words it can be defined as sustenance. Then as logical consequence it contracts, reduces or dissolves after that period of time. So *Brahm* by implication creates, sustains or maintains and then follows it by contradiction, reduction, merger or dissolution by its thought power. Even the English word God is composed of three letters. G for generation, O for operation and D for dissolution or destruction. Thus, the *Brahm* and *Shiv* should be considered synonymous.

These three powers or functions of creator i.e. creation, sustenance and dissolution have been assigned to three different deities in *Hindu* scriptures namely **Brahma**, the power of creation, **Vishnu**, the power which sustains and maintains and **Mahesh**, **Mahadev**, **Shankar** **Tripurari**, **Rudra** etc. is endowed with the function of dissolution, merger or destruction. Word Brahma should not be confused with the word *Brahm* the lord creator. The three aspects of creation, sustained existence and decay are prevalent in each and everything in our Universe or *Brahmand*. Nothing can escape it and there are no exceptions.

In *Hindu* temples the idol of **Mahadev** is installed along with those of other deities of Gods. **Mahesh** or **Mahadev** also erroneousl called Shiv is depicted in the form of figure of a human being. He represents a yogi wearing a lion's skin, holding *Dumroo*, *Kamandal*, *Trishul* etc. in hands with snakes wrapping around his naked torso, having blue neck, a crescent moon on his forehead and **Ganges** or **Ganga** flowing from his head tied in his hair with **Bhuts**, **Pishaches** and **Baitals** in attendance and a **Nandi** or **Bull** sitting by his side. Many *Hindus* contemplate and meditate on this figure.

In *Hindus* there appears to be some confusion or misunderstanding about **Mahesh** or **Mahadev** and **Shiv**. I have said we erroneously call and consider Mahadev as Shiv. Why? Because Mahadev and Shiv are not the same entities. The reasons are, firstly, you must have seen other temples exclusively of Shiv called *Shivalas*. In such *Shivalas* you will find only an oval shaped stone for worship instead of human figure of Mahadev or Mahesh. Two separate types of idols clearly brings out that those are two different entities. Secondly *Brahm* is considered

shapeless or formless i.e. *Nirakar*. Thus, you cannot draw a figure or construct an idol of *Nirakar*. None can ever meditate on *Nirakar*.

One needs something *Sakar* i.e. having figure or shape to contemplate and meditate on.

But a creator can be known, visualized or realized from its creation. The creation of *Brahm* is whole Universe. Hindus scriptures describe the Universe as *Brahmnand*, which is comprised of two word *Brahm* and *Und* (अंड) i.e. egg of *Brahm*. What is the shape of egg, almost oval. The modern science has also proved that universe as a whole is of oval shape. We cannot figure out the shape or form of *Brahm*, but it can be visualized, as best as human can do, only by figuring out the shape of his creation or universe. Thus, to solve the difficulty of meditation on *Nirakar* the next best course or alternative devised by human ingenious mind was to visualize for contemplation and meditation purpose the figure or form of universe, which is oval. Hence, *Brahm* the creator is depicted and installed in *Shivalas* as oval stone. That is real shape of **Shiv** and not human figure of **Mahesh** or **Mahadev** or **Shankar**.

Thirdly, **Mahesh** represents only one quality or function of the Lord creator i.e. dissolution or merger, whereas the creator itself exercises all three powers including creation and sustenance also. Fourthly, **Shiv** meaning *Kalyan*, *Sudhar* and *Unnati* etc. are the prerogative of the Lord creator and cannot be allocated to one of its functionaries, whose main function is only dissolution or merger.

Fifth, I cite a concrete evidence to corroborate the above. The main, world renowned and most important temple of **Shiv** in

Banaras, India is called *Kashi Vishawnath temple*. The main deity installed there and worshipped is in the form of *Shiv Ling* i.e. oblong piece of stone. It is revered as **Vishwanath**, which literally means Lord of the Universe. The conclusion is that *Shiv* is the Lord of whole Universe or its creator i.e. **Brahm** and not one of its subordinates powers embodied in the form of **Mahesh, Mahadev or Shankar**.

In pictures and idols of **Mahadev**, *Shiv Netra* is conspicuously exhibited on the forehead of *Mahesh* or *Mahadev*. If *mahadev* is *Shiv* itself, then where is the necessity for an extra eye, when there are two full eyes as in humans. The existence of third eye itself indicates that it is something separate and distinct, the presence of which is a mark differentiation between one from the other. This in turn supports the view that *Shiv* and *Mahadev* are not the same entity. Similarly, the existence of **Ganga** on *Mahadev*'s head points to the same conclusion that *Shiv* and *Mahadev* are not synonymous. *Brahm* or *Shiv* is creator and sustainer of all life in the universe and is perfect in itself. Then why should he have an extra symbolic *Ganga* on his forehead? It defies all logic and reason and is beyond the actual conception of qualities and characteristics of *Brahm*.

Some may like to have this difference between **Shiv** and **Mahadev** authenticated with reference to *Hindu* scriptures. The very existence of two types of temples even today one having *Mahadev* idol in human form and the other with *Shiv* idol in oval form, is the greatest, practical and solid proof of authentication of the statement. What further proof or authentication of the statement and supporting evidence is required? Moreover our ancient *Rishis*, who knew the difference and also established it for all practical intents and purposes through the

medium of two different types of idols, probably might not have felt the necessity to explain it to public at large and might have been imparting this knowledge to their deserving disciples through word of mouth, who had intellect and intelligence to differentiate and make a distinction. In modern times there are several types of gadgets like fridge, radio, television, computer etc. Does everybody know the underlying principle and components as well. General public has only to make use of them and need not know the principle of their working and components. Only the research workers and developers have to learn those. Further there might be some reference to it somewhere in some religious treatises, which may be rare and not be accessible now, as it was not required or intended to be part of general information for common folks.

As to why there is confusion or misunderstanding about **Mahadev** and **Shiv** as well as **Vishnu** and **Brahm** the creator is a different subject needing elucidation and explanation separately and is beyond the scope of today's topic.

According to *Hindu* philosophy and scriptures the hypothesis, “*What is in the microcosm, the same is in macrocosm*”, i.e. the structure of human body is similar to that of universe. It implies the man is micro replica of universe. The Christianity and Islam also believe that God created Adam in his own image. The only difference is that human being is very limited, where as *Ishwar* is limitless. Therefore let us first examine the microcosm i.e. human body, which can easily and readily be done.

According to Hindu *Yod Pranali* (प्रणाली) i.e. parlance, system, practice and experience, a human body has six *Chakras* or *Kamals* or nerve centers called ganglia in medical science. These are repositories of extra ordinary energy and vitality and

have special and specific functions to perform for the maintenance and upkeep of human body in perfect harmony and normal health. These six *Chakras* or ganglia are formed by convergence of large number of nerve fibers in groups or bunches at various nerve centers.

These six *Chakras* are called *Mul Chakra*, *Indri Chakra*, *Nabhi Chakra*, *Hriday Chakra*, *Kanth Chakra*, and *Ajana Chakra*. The presiding entities or powers assigned at these centers are described as *Ganesh*, *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Mahadev*, *Shakti* and *Atma* or *Soul* respectively.

CHAKRA	PRESIDING DEITY
Mul Chakra	Ganesh
Indri Chakra	Brahma
Nabhi Chakra	Vishnu
Hriday Chakra	Mahadev
Kanth Chakra	Shakti
Ajana or Atma Chakra	Soul

The fourth *Chakra* or *Hriday Chakra* is the seat of presiding deity **Mahadev** also so called **Shiv**. The predominant natural element at this *Chakra* is considered air. This center or *Chakra* is thought to be related to the heart in human body. Those who have studied biology in school must have learnt about shape and composition of heart. Our *Rishis* have symbolized the form and functions of heart in the visual figure of **Mahadev** or **Mahesh** installed in temples or sketched on paper in human form. Let us take up each characteristics and functions of heart one by one. Mahadev is shown as a *Yogi*, who has renounced

worldly possessions, has no attachment, sitting in deep meditation. Heart also does not keep the blood stored for self use. Whatever impure blood comes through veins is pumped to lungs for purification and is returned to the body after purification through arteries. It goes on performing that function without interruption throughout one's life time. So it is a *Yogi* in real terms working selflessly. A *Yogi* tries to improve the life of others and by means of advice, suggestion and actions persuades a change of heart in a bad person and converts him into a good one.

The heart exactly does the same by conversion and purification of impure blood full of toxins into healthy and useful one for the whole of body. **Shankar** or **Mahadev** has snakes around the torso. Veins carrying the impure blood are epitomized as snakes, while the impurities and toxins in blood are nothing short of venom of the reptiles, which if allowed to remain in human body can not only make it seriously ill but can even kill. **Ganga Dhar** is also one of the names of Mahadev because holy **Ganga** descending from heaven perches on his head. The heart has four chambers called ventricles and atria. The purified blood laden with fresh oxygen is pumped from the left side of the heart through Aorta to all arteries of the body symbolizes the Ganga water, which is life giving elixir. According to *Hindu* belief and mythology a bath in Ganga water destroys all the sins or paps. What does the purified blood do? It dissolves all the toxins in the body and carries most of it to the lower chamber on the right side of heart through Vena Cava, which denotes ocean or sea, where Ganga carries all the impurities and which exists at lower level than **Mount Kailash** or Aorta on the left side of the heart, where from Ganga or purified blood flows. When one's heart is in good condition, the body is

sound. In that condition one can properly concentrate and meditate, thereby acquiring higher worldly as well as spiritual knowledge. It symbolizes the opening of the third eye called **Shiv Netra**.

Another name for **Mahadev** is **Chander Shekhar**, because of his presence of crescent moon on his forehead. The crescent moon on the forehead is a sign and symbol indicating spiritual achievement. When one meditates, a stage comes after sustained hard practice defined as *Samadhi*, in which one actually perceives light within having shape of a sort of moon. It points out, reminds and asserts the spiritual aspect of a *Yogi* like Mahadev, which provides inspiration and encourages everybody to experience the same.

Being master and controller of **Bhuts**, **Pishachs** and **Baitals**, **Shankar** is also known as **Bhutnath**. What are Bhuts and Pishachs? These are nothing but instruments of destruction available to Mahadev. In real sense they are various diseases and ailments which being destructive in nature are kept under check and control or subdued by a sound and healthy heart with the help of abundant supply of pure and fresh blood to all parts of the body. But if these Bhuts and Pishachs are let loose, they play havoc and one is liable to be injurious and have mal effects of diseases including hallucinations, and derangement of the brain which is supposed to be actions of Bhuts by people at large. Also the different faculties of brain and body are hampered and lost, and may eventually cause death in some cases. In musical terms Betal means without tal i.e. without rhythm and harmony. The term Baitals of Mahadev implies that when heart's rhythm is disturbed, then every part of body plunges into disharmony and disarray.

Because of blue neck or blue throat *Mahadev* has also been named as **Neel Kanth**. *Kanth* here implies constriction or valve, which does not permit everything to pass down the throat into stomach thus restricting its passage into the body. As per episode of *Amrit Manthan* described in scriptures a deadly poison emerged out as a result of churning of ocean by *Devtas* and *Daitys* (दैत्य) or *Rakshasas* in the beginning of Universe. It was drunk by **Mahadev** as one of the *Devtas* present there but was kept in the throat by him not allowing to seep down and prevail in the whole body in order to protect rest of the body from destruction. The episode itself further substantiates that *Mahadev* was one of the deities and not the creator *Shiv*. It is only a *Yogi* or a Saint, who is ever ready to suffer and sacrifice himself for the sake of well being of humanity. Keeping of poison in throat is euphemism to indicate that heart collects and temporarily stores impure blood, keeping it under check not allowing it to contaminate rest of the body and destroy it. Only *Mahadev* Lord of destruction could accomplish it by adding one more weapon of destruction to his arsenal.

Nandi or Bull is described as a vehicle of transport of *Mahadev*. The word *Nandi* is derived from the word *Anand* meaning bliss and peace. A *Yogi* like **Shankar** remains transported to the region of peace and bliss with constant meditation. It is just another symbolism to depict bliss and peace of a *Yogi* living in harmony with nature. In our gross world also *Nandi* or Bull is used in growing crops, which are source of our life and resulting happiness.

The normal throbbing of heart or regular rhythmic heart beat denotes ecstatic, rhythmic and entertaining dance of **Natraj** but when that tal or rhythm is disturbed, there is

turmoil, chaos, distress and agony throughout the body. It becomes anything but *Tandav* dance of **Mahadev** the destroyer shaking whole of our universe i.e. human body in microcosm. When heart the seat of deity **Shankar** stops working permanently the body is considered declared dead. It is, therefore, correctly described as destroyer. Keep your heart in good condition by eating nutritious, balanced and healthy food, if you wish to please Mahadev and escape his wrath.

Now let us proceed from microcosm to macrocosm of which human body is a micro replica. In outer universe there is a religion called *Shiv Lok* which is considered the seat of its presiding Lord the macrocosmic **Mahadev**, who emerges, dissolves or destroys the universe at time of *Pralaya* (प्रलय). The Sanskrit word *Lai* (लय) means to dissolve or disappear. The Bhuts of this region are called Panch *Bhut* i.e. *Akash*, *Vayu*, *Agni*, *Jal* and *Prithvi* according to *Hindu* scriptures. In English the translation is *Aakash*, *Air*, *Fire*, *Water* and *Soil*. *Aakash* does not literally mean space or vacuum as commonly understood. The conception of *Aakash* in *Hindu* thought and philosophy propounded by our ancient *Rishis* is quite different. The Sanskrit equivalent of space is *Antriksh* and not *Aakash*. The word sky may represent nearest equivalent to word *Aakash*.

When any of these five element or all of them behave abnormally then unnatural phenomena occur causing destruction, devastation and calamities all round. Till they remain in rhythm or harmony or tal the life is enjoyable. But when they are out of tal or rhythm and become disharmonized they are defined as Baitals. There gross as well subtle forms are controlled and sustained by the power of cosmic **Mahadev**. They keep on dancing or active in harmonious movement in order to nourish the

world in order to accomplish that the pollution of five elements remain in equilibrium and harmony, is to be kept to minimum level so that environment and surroundings continue to be favorable. In a way Mahadev helps in sustaining the world also. Due to the dual functions of help in partial sustenance and main quality of destruction he is designated as **Mahadev** or **Mahesh** meaning *head of deities*.

Damroo of cosmic **Mahadev** is made up of earth and cosmos i.e. outer space. The music of damroo is produced by the movement or motion caused by gravitational force, is thought power of cosmic Mahadev. Only that gravitational force or thought power of Mahadev keeps all astral bodies in place, otherwise all will fall apart resulting in total destruction. Hence Mahadev is the Lord of dissolution, merger or contraction, which is in reality is the destroying power or one characteristic of **Brahm** the creator and Mahadev keeps on drawing that power by continual meditation on the effulgent light of Brahm.

Thus, maintaining the health of heart and keeping the environment clean are two important significants of *Shiv Ratri*. *Shiv Ratri* is the day of *Shiv Vrat*. The word *Vrat* means vow. As stated in the foregoing *Shiv* means *Kalyan, Shubh, Mangal, Sudhar* and *Unnati* or progress. To take a vow for one's personal kalyan and spiritual progress is the real meaning and significance of *Shiv Vrat*. If every human being takes that vow and practice it accordingly, the result would be that whole of humanity would advance towards *Kalyan, Sudhar* and *Unnati*, thereby making this world a better and enjoyable place to live happily and harmoniously and in peace. This is meaningful and true purpose and objective of *Shiv Vrat*.

Besides, *Hindus* worship **Vishnu**, **Durga**, **Ganesh**, **Hanuman** and other deities also. Who should be worshipped, how and by whom are other important topics of discourse, which can be discussed and explained logically.



17

HOLI

A n important *Hindu Parv* was celebrated during the month of March. Holi was on 13th and commemorate the appearance of an *Avtar* of *Vishnu* according to *Hindu* belief. *Narsinh Avtar* appeared in *Sat Yuga*.

The *Holi DAY* is also called *Holika Dahan*. It is related to the ordeal of child **Prahlad**, whose father **Hirankashyapu** tortured him for worshipping Lord **Vishnu**, the sustaining power of the creator Brahm. It may be remembered that **Brahm** being *Nirakar* never incarnates. Only his main subsidiary powers take incarnation.

This *Parv* is based on a factual event and celebrates the triumph of Truth over Falsehood or of Good over Evil. According to the legend **Prahlad** was worshipper of **Bhagawan Vishnu** which his father **Hirankashyapu** never approved. Instead he wanted his son to worship him as God. He made many attempts with torture, repression and persuasion to dissuade him from worshipping Lord Vishnu, but Prahlad did not relent. A sister of Hirankashyapu named **Holika** had a boon that she would not be harmed by fire in any manner. She conspired with her brother king that she would sit on a pyre of

burning wood with the child Prahalad in her lap as a consequence of which Prahalad would die and she would escape unscathed. Accordingly it was done. Prahalad prayed to his ideal Vishnu. Unexpectedly rather opposite to expectations happened. No harm came to Prahalad and Holika caught fire and died. The boon was that she would not be burnt when alone and not in company of some one else.

As an enactment of that event a bonfire is lit on the night of *Holi* with cow dung cakes and logs of wood representing demon **Holika**. The name *Holi* is derived from the name Holika. Still there exists a **Prahalad** temple in Multan proper called *Moolsthan* in olden days now in Punjab, Pakistani. In the temple there is an idle of *Narsingh* or *Narsingh Avtar*, which is worshipped by *Hindus*. A number of years ago new papers in India published an article that after the partition of the country in 1947, some *Muslims* invaded the temple on the mound and tried to set fire to the temple. Some thing unusual, which they could not imagine happened. When they reached the temple, they temporarily lost their vision and the temple vanished from their sight. Being afraid they returned unsuccessful in their bigoted mission. I paid homage at that temple in 1941.

Every year *Holi* falls on the day of *Purnima* or full moon day i.e. the last day of the month of *Phalgun* or *Phagun* of *Hindu Lunar calendar*. On next day called *Phag* or *Dhulendi*. *Hindus* throughout India rejoice, and celebrate it with coloured water, gulal, food music, dance, singing and fun. It is an annual spring festival falling March.

The festival marks the ripening of the winter crops like wheat, gram and other edible grains indicating full glory of spring and ushering in of general prosperity and well being as a

consequence of bumper harvest to feed the community. It is after *Holi* that actual harvesting of crops starts in most parts of the country, though in northern region harvesting is done after *Baisakhi* i.e. first day of the month of *Baisakh*, the first month of *Hindu* Solar calendar almost mid April.

It is the only festival having universal appeal when all castes and communities join together to celebrate it without any distinction of high or low, status and position in social life, age, sex, riches or poverty. All other *Hindu* festivals, like *Raksha Bandhan*, *Diwali* etc. are celebrated as individual family affair at home. Visible group and mass participation outside of home can be found only at the time of *Holi* alone.

It is also memorable as a birth day of **Chaitanya Maha Prabhu**, a famed poet saint of *Bengal*, the pioneer of *Bhagti* Movement and *Kirtan*. He is also believed by some to be *Avatar* of **Bhagwan Vishnu**. He spread the message of love with hatred towards none. Such trailblazers are born from time to time in *Hindus* to revive the tradition of universal love and compassion for all humanity.

In Eastern India idols of **Chaitanya** are installed at that time like those of Goddess **Durga** in *Bengal* and of Lord **Ganesha** in *Maharashtra* on the occasion of *Asauj Navratra* and *Ganesh Chaturthi* respectively. In the same manner after few days the idols of Chaitanya are immersed in flowing water known as *Visarjan* [विसर्जन] ceremony.

In *Assam* and *Orissa* it is celebrated in a slight variation. The processions of Lord **Krishna** are taken out while people play with gulal and coloured water. It is known as *Dol*. In *Brij Bhumi* i.e. the region comprising of *Mathura*, *Vrindavan*, *Nand Gaon*,

Barsana etc. the festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and gusto. There in rural areas the males try to tease females, who in return attempt to stall them with brooms, bamboo sticks, and pieces of stones wrapped in cloth.

However, at present in India generally the rejoicing has degenerated into vulgarity, crude jokes, and cheap frolics along with eve teasing and intoxication with liquor, *Bhang* etc. instead of celebration with innocent fun, innocuous humour and entertainment mixed with compassion, unity, comradeship and inclusion of all and sundry. Sometimes groups indulge in brawls and even fist fights. It is bringing bad name to the festival forcing many to abstain from participation. The dignity, sobriety, civility and gentleness need to be restored to it.

In 1699, **Guru Gobind Singh** organized the *Khalsa* meaning pure as military wing of his struggle against *Mughal* injustice, oppression, curtailment of civil liberties, religious intolerance etc. He recruited volunteers from all corners and states of India and also from all castes including so called *Dalit* classes to make it a mass movement in order to protect and preserve religious rights, freedom and culture of *Hindus* at large. Those volunteers were called singhs meaning lions to infuse the spirit of bravery, sacrifice, and patriotism. Setting an example he changed his own name from **Gobind Rai** to **Gobind Singh**. He never imagined such *Sikh* volunteers to separate themselves from *Hindus* and claim a separate entity and nationhood. After all, the volunteer army comprised of sons of *Hindu* families of all castes. Till the beginning of twentieth century there was almost a general practice in *Punjab Hindu* to ear mark the eldest son in the family as a *kesh dhari sikh*. The later rift was caused by the British in pursuance of their policy of divide and rule, which in *Punjab* were controlled and administered by mostly

Hindu Mahants instead of present *Gurudwara* Committees constituted only of *Sikhs*. It may be a news to you that till then there were installed idols of *Hindu* Gods and Goddess even in main *Sikh* temple in *Amritsar* than called *Har Mandir* and later as *Darbar Sahib*. Most of the offerings came from *Hindus*. That shows that there was not an iota of separation from *Hindus*. However, all the *Sikhs* also celebrate *Holi* on next day of *Phag* known as *Hola Mohalla* in general and particularly at *Anandpur* which is also a paid holiday in *Punjab*. On 17th March, 1996 *Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee* resolved again to call Golden Temple as *Harmandir*.

It is worth mentioning here that all *Hindu* festivals are celebration of joy, happiness and prosperity, which carry the message of life and hope. We do not commemorate events of death and mourning unlike other religions of the world.

Holi festival teaches us firm faith in God under all circumstances of ups and downs of life and to treat all people as equal member of an extendd family without any prejudice and discrimination based on colour, caste, creed, sex, age, social or financial position and status.



18

RAM NAVMII

*J*t falls on ninth day of start of new *Vikrami Samvat*, which is also the beginning of spring or *Chait* (caot) *Navratras*. It needs no introduction as every *Hindu* is aware of its significance as birthday of **Bhagwan Rama**. His biography is known as *Ramayana*. I do not intend to dwell on the story. To start with, the Epic was written in the form of a *Sanskrit* poem by **Maharishi Balmik** in *Treta Yug*. I am sure all are well versed with the life history of the Maharishi Balmik, *Hindus* believe that he had written *Ramayana*, Hundreds of years before the actual incarnation of Rama. But he had composed it upto the point of return from self-exile of Bhagwan Ram to *Ayodhya* after fourteen years and his coronation. It is also believed that *Luv Kush Kand* was added later by the Maharishi after **Sita Mata** was actually exiled and arrived at his *Ashram* to say with him.

Since then many translations of his work have appeared in all parts of India and world as well, in different languages and dialects at different times. Dances based on the events in *Ramayana* are enacted and performed depicting those episodes even in SouthEast countries of Asia especially like *Cambodia*,

Bali, Thailand (old name Shiam), *Indonesia* etc. Though *Indonesia* is now almost totally a *Muslim* country having largest *Muslim* population in the world, yet *Ramayana* based on dances are still very popular there. In a country like *Nepal*, which is still a *Hindu* country, as well as *Bangla Desh*, *Sri Lanka* etc. where *Hindus* form a significant slice of population *Ramayana* is widely read and believed in. In other foreign countries also, wherever *Hindus* live, the message and the book itself is revered tremendously.

However, the most popular and universally accepted translation in *Hindi* poetry is the **Ram Charitra Manas** composed by **Goswami Tulsi Das**. This is the story of life of Rama as a human being, Goswami Tulsi Das lived in 16th century AD and was a contemporary of **Bhagat Sur Das**, a blind person originally named **Bilwa Mangal**, who was devotee of **Bhagwan Krishna**. Those were times of **Mughal King Akbar**. Tulsi Das was born in village *Mow* of *Banda District* in U.P. India in 1532 AD and expired in 1623 AD at the ripe old age of 91.

Legend has it that before **Goswami** had actual vision of **Bhagwan Rama** at *Chitrakut*, he was almost desperate and crazy to see Rama in human form. The story goes that he used to go out daily in the woods to answer the call of nature in the morning like all the people living in rural India even now practice as a routine. On his return he used to empty his can of water at the foot of a dead *Kikar* or *Babul* tree. After a certain period of time, the tree started sprouting with green leaves. One day when he had watered the trees as usual, a *Bhut* or a ghost appeared before him. He told Goswami that he was very pleased with him as he had been instrumental in his release and

salvation from ghostwood due to the irrigation of dead tree and would then be going to upper regions. But before doing so he asked Goswami to indicate his one wish, which he would grant to repay his kindness. Goswami asked him to arrange his meeting with Bhagwan Rama in person. The ghost expressed his inability to grant that boon but said that he could disclose the presence of **Hanumana** to him, who might be able to answer his prayer and grant the wish. He told Tulsi Das that in a nearby temple where *Ram Katha* was recited daily, Hanumana in guise of an old man is the earliest person to arrive as well as the last to depart. Tulsi Das attended the *katha* next day and when the old man was about to leave he prostrated at old man's feet and prayed. At first the old man did not admit that he was Hanumana incarnate, but on the persistence of Goswami he relented and appeared to him in true form and asked him what he wanted. Tulsi Das explained his purpose and objective. Hanumana ordained him to translate **Valmik's Ramayan** in the then language of common folk and further prophesied that in due course Bhagwan Rama would grant his wish and appear to him in human form. It is how Goswami started writing Ram Charitra Manas in poetry. The popular biography is life story of Bhagwan Rama in human form but there is one small portion, which deals with spiritual aspect. It is discourse between **Kak Bhushundi** and **Garuda**.

Tulsi Das had separately written **Ghat Ramayana** which is a pure spiritual treatise. He had also written several other works such as *Tulsi Granthavali*, *Hanuman chalisa*, *Tulsi Ratnavali*, *Tulsi Bhajnawali*, *Tulsi Prashanawali*, etc. manuscripts of some of his writings might have been lost, but collection of his Dohas are still available and quite popular.

For example:

“दया धर्म का मूल हैं पाप मूल ब्रह्मान
तुलकी दया न होज्य जब लग घट में प्राण।”

Here *Daya* does not mean pity but compassion and love for all. As charity begins at home, one should have *Daya* on oneself in the first instance by performance of good deeds and devotion to God with firm faith, which would relieve one of all pain and suffering. Then one would be able to share his love and compassion with others. However *Daya* does not mean not to defend and protect the innocent against a criminal, murderer, thief or an outside invader with violent means if need be. Violence in such cases becomes non-violence and *Daya* for safeguarding human right of the victims or to be victims of the violence by unscrupulous and selfish marauders. But do not intentionally harm any body. **Goswami ji** fully believe what **Lord Krishna** said in **Bhagwad Gita** that he comes again and again for the reformation of society. He was fully aware that incarnations of **Ram** or **Vishnu** appear from time to time in different forms in different lands in order to reform the then prevailing communities as he himself said:

“Nana bhanti Ram avtara

Ramayan shat koti apaara.”

“नाना भाँती राम आपतावा

रामायण शत कोटि आपाशा।”

It is not essential that the actual *Ramayana* should be repeated as happened in *Treta Yug*. No incarnation has ever repeated itself. Saint **Kabir** has further defined and refined the concept of **Ram** indicating its spiritual dimension when he said:

“Ek Ram Dashrath ka beta
 Ek Ram ghat ghat main betha
 Ek Ram ka sakal pasara
 Ek Ram in sab se nayara.”
 “एक राम दशरथ का भेटा
 एक राम घट घट में भैठा
 एक राम का अकल पक्षावा
 एक राम इन काष औ न्याबा।”

According to him there are four **Rams**. **Kabir** mostly expressed spiritual knowledge in parables. Its explanation is: There are three forms of **Brahm**, the Creator. One is the Brahm in gross or *Sthul* form, which is also known as *Virat* or *Sabal Brahm* (सबल ब्रह्म). The second is subtle or *Suksham* (सुक्ष्म) form, which is also called *Avyakrit* (अव्याकृत) or *Antaryamin* (अन्तर्गयमी) and is also defined as *Shudh Brahma* (शुद्ध ब्रह्म). Mind is the instrument of action through our thought power. Thought comes first then actions follows. Similarly, *Shudh Brahm* or the Subtle Mind is the instrument of action in whole of this universe, which in reality is a means of all creation whether visible or invisible. Third is the casual or *Karan* (कारण) form of *Brahm* which is also known as *Par Brahm* (पर ब्रह्म) which through the motion of his thought power i.e. Universal Mind causes all creation. *Parm Brahm* is also named as *Hiranyagarbh*, where in all creation exists in its seed form or casual form.

Kabir’s first Ram is son of Dashrath born as incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Second Ram is our individual mind which is seated in every individual body. His third Ram is Shudh Brahm or the Universal Mind the instrument of creation of all the

universes. His fourth Ram is Par Brahm which is quite distinct from all foregoing three Rams.

Kabir lived in the 14th and 15th centuries AD during the reign of **Sikander Lodhi**. According to **Kabir Panthi** literature he lived for 119 long years from 1398 to 1518 AD. He was an orphan born in village *Lehr Tara Near Benaras Cantt.*, and was a disciple of **Swami Ramanand** of *Benaras*. He preached spirituality based on the wisdom and knowledge propounded in our *Upanishads*, which being in *Sanskrit* was not being widely understood and only selected scholars could interpret it. He however taught and explained it in simple language of the time, which common folk could also easily follow. To avoid the wrath of the prejudice and fanatic *Muslim* rulers of the time he rather preferred to express spiritual terms, tenets and procedures in parables, which only persons having practical spiritual experience could elucidate.

At the turn of this century **Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal**, a *Srivastava Kayasth* wrote *Maha Ramayana* explaining every character, event and episode purely from spiritual angle. He was a versatile scholar of *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Brahmans*, *Purans*, *Bhagwat Gita* and different spiritual thoughts and philosophy of *Hindu* religion. He wrote commentary on *Bhagwat Gita* too. He had done comparative study of other Indian religions as well as of foreign religions too. For a number of years he was editor of **Arya Gazette Lahore**.

He was M.A. in English and Head Master by profession. He was awarded LL.D. by Chicago University in 1909 when he visited U.S.A. to deliver his spiritual sermons and discourses. He lived from 1859 to 1939. He was christened **Shiv Brat Lal** because he was born in a town near *Benaras*, India on *Shiv*

Ratri day and expired on the same auspicious day. Like **Gautam Buddha** whose birth as well as death anniversary fall on *Buddha Purnima*. He was a *prolific writer and wrote more than three thousand books, journals, periodicals, pamphlets, sermons and essays* etc. during his lifetime on all spiritual aspects and subjects in *Hindi, Urdu* and *English* explaining all their terminologies intricacies and basic conceptions too in simple language which can be easily understood by a person of common intelligence. He was contemporary of spiritual leaders like **Vivekananda, Madan Mohan Malvia, Ram Tirath, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Swami Shradhananda, Aurobindu Ghosh, Mahatma Hansraj, Mahatma Gandhi, Yogananda** and others.

In 1920s **Pundit Radhey Sham** of U.P. India wrote *Ramayana* in *Hindustani* a mixture of *Hindi* and *Urdu* in poem form. It became quite popular in the region where *Hindustani* was understood and for whom tough *Hindi* words from *Tulsi Ramayana* could not be easily comprehended and fully understood. One **Jaswant Singh** of *Tohana*, Haryana composed *Ramayana* in poetry in *Haryanvi* dialect in 1930s. I think *Ramayana* is the most popular religious and mythological scripture of *Hindus* now. Its popularity can be gauged from the fact that **Ram Lila** is enacted annually during *Asauj Navratras* almost in every town and city of India. It is also performed in *Drama* form on stage too very frequently by *Ram lila mandlies*. At least every *Hindu* is well versed with events of the epic *Ram kathas, Akhand paths* and daily recitation of the scripture and are in vogue because of its universal appeal. When *Ramayana* was being televised on *Doordarshan* in India people remained glued to TV sets for half an hour on Sundays forgetting all other business of life. It contributed to enhancement of its popularity

manifold so much so that even *Muslims* in *Pakistan* and *Bangla Desh* also watched the serial regularly, video cassettes of which are also available in USA and other foreign countries.

Reverting to *Ram Navmi* itself **Bhagwan Rama** is also known as **Maryada Purashottam**, who established norms of human conduct and behavior in life by his practical example as a son, a brother, a pupil, a husband, a friend, a ruler and a disciple. There is no aspect of life where he had not set an ideal with his personal conduct and service. What lessons do we draw from his life and the epic. There are many. I would summarize the most important of all his practices as:

“आवना क्षे कर्तव्य इच्छा है।”

It is precursor of what **Bhagwan Krishna** defined and elaborated in **Bhagwad Gita** as *Nishkam Karma* (निष्काम कर्म). In every action he kept this ideal before him and tried to follow it even under extreme stress of a dilemma facing him between his duty as a king having to respect public opinion and his order to exile **Sita Mata** his most beloved and devoted wife. At great personal sacrifice, emotional distress, pain and mental anguish he decided to give priority to his duty as a ruler for the sake of his subjects. What more can a ruler imagine to do to respect the opinion of his subjects as a duty of a monarch. The lesson is to do one's duty under all circumstances as far as possible. It does not mean that emotions and sentiments have no place in practical life. What it emphasizes is that there are occasions in one's life when one is torn between emotions and duty. On such occasions one has to weight his emotions against one's obligations or duties and apply one's intellect judiciously before taking a final decision. There would also be times when emotions and emotions alone should outweigh and take precedence over the duty. As an *Urdu* poet had said:

“आच्छा है दिल के पाबणाने आकल
लेकिन कशी कशी इन्हों तन्हा श्री छोड़ दें।”

It means that generally our intellect should stand guard to harness our emotions but at certain times and occasions emotions should be left alone and allowed to take their own course. By eating already tasted berries presented by **Shabri**, the so-called dalit tribal, he demonstrated that only love and faith mattered in one's own devotion to God. Saint **Palto** later in 16th century AD echoed the same sentiment when he preached:

“गालिक के दबाव में केवल भक्ति प्यास।”

Bhagwan Ram's declaration of **Nishad Raj**, a dalit by caste and a boatman by profession, as his friend (सखा) was nothing but repudiation of prejudice and discrimination based on high or low caste and profession. He upheld dignity of labour. As **Goswami Tulsi Das** later said:

“जात पात पूछे नहीं कोई हव्वि को शजे झो हव्वि का होई।”

Same view was expressed by **Guru Nanak** earlier when he sermonized:

“कर्मी नाल होन निषेड़े खड़ीबहन गीयां जातां।”

The grant of human form again to **Ahilya** the wife of **Rishi Gautam**, not **Gautam Buddha**, who had cursed her, to turn into a stone on suspicion of infidelity towards him, when in reality she had become the victim of rape by fraudulence of **God King Inder** by appearing to her in the disguise of her husband, was an unequivocal dispensation of **Ram's** impartial justice. He laid down that unintentionally committed infidelity does not constitute and should not be considered as a crime and therefore should not be punished as such. Thus, a victim

deserves to be restored all previous dignity, integrity, honour and rights as a normal human being. It is another lesson of *Ramayana*.

The excommunication and expulsion of **Bhibishan** by his elder brother King **Ravana** from his family and kingdom as a punishment for expression of honest dissenting opinion resulted in the destruction of Ravana's empire, family and nation of *Rakshasas* due to the disclosures of weakness and loopholes of his regime to **Bhagwan Rama**. It is clear warning to all rulers to guard against such brash, rash and hasty action. *Ghar Ka Bhedi Lanka Dhaye* (घर का भेदी लंका ढाएँ) as the saying goes.

In the same context there is one more lesson. **Bhagwan Rama** proved that the enemy of one's enemy is a friend and should be provided all help without coveting to usurp his legal possessions, his rights and privileges. He practically accomplished it by the return of **Ravana**'s kingdom to his friend and ally **Bhibishan** respecting his status and rights, though he was the conquerer and had every justification to retain it. This is friendship. Another example of which is protection of **Sugreev** by killing **Bali**.

Another lesson is to keep one's promise:

“**बधू कुल श्रीत ऋषा चली आई प्राण जाएँ पश्च धरन न जाई।**”

As a son not only he kept his own promise given to his father **Dashratha** but by also undertaking to fulfill the promise given by his father to his second wife **Kaikayee**. He continued to remain in exile for full fourteen years despite the fact that his **Guru Vashisht**, all three of his real mother and step mothers, parents in law, brothers **Bharat** and **Shatrughan**, Ministers, Military Commanders, and other Notables of Ayodhya went to

him in the *Jungle*, vehemently requested and pleaded with him with all the persuasion and arguments at their command and asked him unanimously to return to Ayodhya. He resisted all the pressure and declined to oblige before the completion of exile period.

However, there is one accompanying lesson in it. One should give word only after full consideration of all the pros and cons of the promise to be given and should not act in haste like **Dashratha** did, who gave open ended blanket undertaking to **Kaikayee** which resulted in so much pain, suffering and agony to all his near and dear ones including his subjects culminating in Dashratha's own death. To break one's promise is a character flaw but it is always better not to make a promise than to break it. I can go on and on with other lessons from **Ram's** life and *Ramayana* but I would cut it short for now.



19

MAHAVIR JAYANTI

*J*n 1996 *Mahavir Jayanti* was on 1st April. Every year it falls on *Chait Shudi Tirodshi* or 28th day of the month of *Chait* of *Hindu* of Lunar calendar year.

Vardhman Mahavir was the 24th or the last *Tir-Thankar* of *Jain* and a contemporary of **Gautam Buddha**, the founder of *Buddhism*. He was a prince born in 599 BC in a village near *Patna*, Bihar, India, renounced worldly life at the age of 32 and died in 527 BC at the age of 72. He rearranged and compiled concepts, teachings, and principles of *Jainism* preached and propagated by his 23 preceding *Tir Thankars* and was called *Jin* meaning spiritual conqueror. One of its 24 *Tir Thankars* namely **Rishabh Dev** is found to have some reference in *Hindu* scripture. Rishab Dev the *first Tir Thankar* was the founder of *Jainism*, when large number of people became fed up with *Hindu* rituals, rites and practices they expressed revulsion to the later mass malpractice of animal sacrifices in the name of religion by the blind faith followers of *Hinduism*. It all started as a sort of protest reform movements in the form of *Jainism* as well as *Buddhism*. Therefore, both of these religions laid greater emphasis on non-violence of any sort in words and

deeds making *Ahimsa* the major plank of those movements though *Hinduism* also taught non-violence to a large extent in daily life.

Main teachings of *Jainism* are belief in *Ahimsa*, laws of *Karma*, seven causes of human sufferings i.e. *Maya*, *Lobh*, *Krodh*, *Madh*, *Dvesh*, *Nirdayata* and *Trishna*. *Hindus* also believed in laws of *Karma* and considered *Maya*, *Mana*, *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar* also as sources of human suffering. According to the Jain teachings attachment to worldly objects is the main cause of our troubles and it strongly advocates ascetic practices and penance by fasting and observation of other austerities. In Hindu thought, detachment and *Nishkam Karma* is preached for salvation. Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct are preached as three values of Jain doctrine. In *Hinduism* one is advised to be pure in intentions, words and deeds. There does not appear to be basic difference in concepts of both *Hinduism* and *Jainism*. Therefore, from that angle *Jainism* can be considered as a branch of *Hinduism*. However, *Jainism* does not believe in the existence of God unlike *Hindus* do. They also believe that both *Jiva* and *Ajiva* are eternal having neither beginning nor end. Nor there is any controller or administrator of our world. Their highest spiritual goal is attainment of state of *Kevala* and to become *Jin*. *Hindus* also believe that soul is eternal, is an ansh or particle of God and is therefore indestructible existing forever.

However, instead of analyzing the nature of God it seems better to lay down practical means of attaining the life of perfection here and now. Hence it is not of material ultimate consequence, whether *Jains* or *Buddhists* believe in existence of God or not. The aim of God realization in *Hinduism* is also to attain perfection, but all the three religions practice meditation to

achieve enlightenment. When it is done, one automatically realizes the existence of Supreme consciousness, which is nothing but the Creator or God.

In 1st century BC *Jains* split into two main sects. One *Digambers*, whose monks adopted total nudity or nakedness as symbol of severance of all attachments. Second *Shvetambers*, whose monks clad in white clothes implying purity and renunciation. They also do not agree over some teachings of *Jainism* and maintain their own religious literature. There is a third sect of *Jains* also, known as *Terapanthis*.

Jainism became the state religion when **Chander Gupt Maurya**, the grandfather of **Ashoka** the Great and who had also defeated the Greek general and representative of **Alexander** the Great in India named **Selucas**, converted as **Jain**.

Many artistically and architecturally constructed beautiful *Jain* temples are clustered in *Rajasthan*, *Bihar*, *Gujarat* and *Karnataka* etc. serve as pilgrim centers of *Jains* from all over the world and are also tourist attraction spots, where other foreign and Indian travellers flock regularly. To cite a few are *Jain* temples at *Khajurao*, *Ajmer*, *Calcutta*, *Hastinapur* and the colossal rock statue of *Bahu Bali* in *Karnatak* at *Sharavan Gol Bela*.

In April another very important astral event also takes place every year on which are based all astrological calculations. It is the entry of Sun in the astrological sign Aries or *Mesh* (เมษ) on 13th April i.e. *Mesh Sankrant* to start another year of journey in Elliptic or Zodiac as perceived from the Earth. It is the first day of *Baisak* according to Hindu Solar calendar, which governs all calculation in Indian astrology. This auspicious New Year's day is called *Baisakhi* in *Punjab* and other North Indian states.

Almost every state in India has a name for its New Year day such as *New Varsh* by *Bengalis*, *Pudu Varshann* by *Tamils*, *Vishu* by *Malyalees*, *Guruu* or *Rangla Bihu* by *Assamees*. Followers *Buddhism* believe that **Gautam Buddha** attained enlightenment on 1st *Baisakh* in *Sarnath deer park* also called of *Bodhgaya* near the city of *Gaya* in Bihar, India. *Swami Dayanand* established *Arya Samaj* in *Bombay* on this day in 1875. *Guru Gobind Singh* baptized *Panj Pyaras* on this day in 1699 organizing the order of *Khalsa* i.e. volunteer *Sikh* force to protect and preserve *Hindu* religion and culture.

In Northern India region harvesting is done of winter crops on the next day of *Baisakhi*. On *Baisakhi* day melas are held in rural areas of *Punjab* celebrated with *Bhangra* dance. In Central India it is observed as match making event.

The recent significance of this day in modern times is the great massacre of hundreds of freedom fighters in *Jallian Wala Bagh* in *Amritsar* on *Baisakhi day* in 1919, by the *British General O'DWYER*, when public gathered in strength to attend a protest rally in support of the freedom movement, but which was turned into a killing field. It was after his holocaust that the freedom movement gained extra momentum when **Mahatma Gandhi** visited the killing site and addressed a public meeting. Now at that site stands a beautiful Liberty Monument carved in red stone in the garden as a memorial to the sacrifice and patriotism of martyrs. Every tourist visiting *Amritsar* pays homage to the sacrifice, courage and bravery of those freedom fighters at that shrine standing near the *Golden Temple* of *Sikhs*.



20

BUDDH PURNIMA

This year *Buddha Purnimma* falls on 18th of May. For Buddhists the day is most important one. Legend has it that **Gautam Buddha** was born on *Baisakh Purnima* i.e. full moon day of the month of *Baisakh* of Hindu Lunar Calendar and also left for his heavenly abode on the same day at the age of 80 in *Kushinagar*. He was born a prince and heir to throne of the kingdom of *Shakya Tribe* at its capital *Kapilvastu* about 100 miles north of *Benaras*, India in the year 563 BC. His father was **Shudhodan** and he was named **Siddharath Gautam**. At the time of his birth it was predicted that either he would be a ruler or a monk. After his marriage to **Yashodhara** and birth of his son **Rahul** he one night renounced his luxurious life and left for forests in search of solution of human sufferings, which he witnessed all around during his young age.

At first he practiced asceticism doing penances, fasting etc. but did not find peace of mind, which he was seeking. He then sat under a *Banyan tree* near *Bodhgaya* in deep meditation till he received enlightenment one day, while he was only in his thirties, as a consequence of which he was called **Buddha** i.e.

the enlightened one. His first sermon was given in *Deer park* in *Sarnath* in U.P., India. He preached his doctrine till his death in 483 BC. His teachings later became known as *Buddhism*. He is considered *Ninth Avatar* of **Bhagwan Vishnu** according to *Hindu* belief. Both *Buddhism* and *Jainism* started as protest movements to reform *Hinduism*, in the practice of which there had crept excessive rituals and rites coupled with greater emphasis on the ritual of animal sacrifices, which had been introduced by later day blind faith followers of *Hinduism*. The abhorrence and revulsion for animal sacrifices became almost an obsession and *Ahimsa* became a major plank of both *Buddhism* and *Jainism*'s teachings, which they described as *Ahimsa Parmodharma* (अहिंसा परमोदर्थ) meaning that *non-violence is the core basic principle of Dharma*.

Buddha in *Surangama*, *Brahmjala*, *Angulimalya*, *Mahavaipulya*, *Lankavattra* and *Mahaparinirvana Sutras* forbade eating of any kind of flesh, while delivering his sermons to his chief disciples **Anand** and **Mahakasyapa**. It was later that his teachings were misinterpreted that the *Buddhists* started eating non-vegetarian diet.

Buddha was contemporary of **Vardhman Mahavir**, the last and 24th *Tirthankar* of *Jainism*, which has similarities and commonalities with *Buddhism*. As Buddha was initially motivated to find cure for human sufferings, his noble Truths include.

Existence of suffering

Human sufferings are universal in everything we do in life. The purpose of expounding this noble truth was to draw attention to the imperfection and transitoriness of human life.

The cause of suffering

Buddha laid emphasis on the causes of suffering in order to suggest solution to it. According to him there were twelve causes of suffering. They are *Avidya* or ignorance, *Sanskaras* or actions in previous births, *Vigyan* of consciousness, *Nam Rupa* i.e. name and form, *Sada Yatna* or six fields of five sense organs and mind, *Sparsh* or contact between objects and senses, *Bedana* or sensation, *Trishna* i.e. desire, *Upadhana* or clinging to existence, *Bhav* or of being, *Jati* or rebirth and *Jara Marna* or old age and death. *Nam* here does not stand for name in usual sense of the word but psychic factors constituting aggregate of mental experiences. These twelve causes are different links of the same chain starting from *Avidya* or ignorance followed in the order given below. First gives rise to the second, second to the third and so on. So main or the first cause is *Avidya*.

Removal of suffering

Buddha said that *Bhav* or desire to live is the sole or top most cause of suffering and cessation of suffering is not possible as long as our desire to live continues. In essence it means living with non-attachment because bondage is due to attachment or our desire, which causes *Karmas*. **Buddha's** No. 1 truth is nothing but *Law of Karma of Hinduism*. He, therefore, preached to mend our thoughts, speech and actions to alleviate the sufferings of existence i.e. life. In *Hinduism* also we are taught to be pure in thoughts, speech and actions. In *Hinduism* too *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar* are advised to be channelized in the right direction. Both religions believe in rebirth. In both *Hinduism* and *Buddhism* the ultimate object is *Moksh* or *Nirvan* i.e. freedom from worldly sufferings for ever and peace as final goal.

Buddha suggested the eight fold path to his disciples in order to attain *Nirvan*. It included:

- (i) Right view
- (ii) Right intention
- (iii) Right speech
- (iv) Right action
- (v) Right living or livelihood
- (vi) Right effort
- (vii) Right thought
- (viii) Right meditation or concentration

In **Bhagwat Gita** the middle course of *Nishkam Karma Yoga* is propounded , which enjoins one neither to give up *Karma* or action; and that which is practically impossible to do; nor to be attached to it. It thus neither advocates renunciation nor attachment but prompts only the change of attitude. Aristotle said that virtue is a golden mean between two extremes. For example courage is a golden mean between cowardice and foolhardiness. Bhagwat Gita having been expounded more than two thousand years earlier and being the essence of *Hinduism* must have exercised great influence on **Buddha** also.

As in earlier years of life **Buddha** was overwhelmed by the spectacles of human sufferings, his foremost concern and main propelling objective was to ameliorate human suffering and to guide them to attain *Nirvana* thus ensuring eternal freedom from it. Buddha was thus constrained to adopt the easy to be followed middle path of righteous living without the then

prevalent cumbersome practices. His middle path was most pragmatic for his purpose of preaching *Dharma*. As a matte of fact the general masses belonging to any religion are never enamored of or interested in technical details, intricacies, terminology, or sophisticated complex rituals.

They remain eager to understand simple truths in simple language and would like to follow an easy course to lead life happily with peace of mind. The *Hindu* rituals required elaborate arrangements, which were time consuming, expensive and needing a *Pandit* to chant *Vedic Mantras* in *Sanskrit*. The majority of people could not afford any of these. **Buddha**, therefore, taught only what was necessary to live righteous life leading to *Nirvana*. The middle path of Buddha has spiritual connotation also. In our forehead there are three arteries. One each on either side are denoted as *Inglia* or *Ira* and *Pingla*. The middle one is known as *Sushmana*. To attain enlightenment every soul has to traverse through the middle *Sushmana* during meditation. That is the middle path of *Buddhist* spiritual philosophy. In *Buddhist* literature one cannot find a direct reference to the existence of God unlike other world religions believe in, which led to the perception that Buddha did not believe in the existence of God. It is not true, but he did not mention it in his preachings. The question arises, Why? The answer lies in the following episode.

Once **Buddha** was sitting under the shade of a *Simsupa tree*. He tore a few leaves and put them before his disciples. He then asked them whether those leaves exhausted all the leaves of tree. Obviously the disciples answered in the negative. Then Buddha exclaimed as below; I quote, “As surely I know more than what I have told you. And wherefore my disciples, have I not told you that? Because my disciples it brings you no profit,

it does not conduce to progress in holiness, because it does not lead to turning from the earthly, to the subjection of all desires, to cessation of transitory, to peace, to knowledge, to illumination, to Nirvana. Therefore, I have not declared it unto you."

However, instead of analyzing the nature of the God; it seems better to lay down practical means of attaining life of perfection here and now. Hence it is not of ultimate material consequence, whether *Buddhists* or *Jains* believe in the existence of God. The main aim of God realization in *Hinduism* is also to attain perfection, but both these religions advocate meditation to achieve enlightenment. When it is achieved one automatically realizes the existence of supreme Consciousness, which is nothing but Creator or God. Before enlightenment none can have unshakable faith in God, though one may profess to do so. It is actual experience, which creates faith in any thing. Our so-called faith in God is either blind one or semi-faith till our worldly desires are fulfilled. If our desire or objective is not answered, we are liable and tend to lose faith in God. Not only that, sometimes we begin to question even His very existence. The highest state of spirituality in *Buddhism* is termed as *Tatha Gat* which is an absolute and positive state. So **Buddha** is also described as **Tatha Gat**. In the *Buddhist* concept *Sunya* or *Sunyata* has special significance. It is described like the boundless void, which cannot be fathomed or measured. According to the *Hindu* concept it is the spiritual stage known as *Par Brahm*, where all creation exist in the form of seed. It is also termed as *Hiranyagarbh* or the casual state.

Taking cognizance of all the above facts *Buddhism* can be considered reformed extension of *Hinduism*, though *Buddhist* literature is considered a part of Heterodox literature, which

does not accept the authority of *Vedas*, because it was a movement against *Vedic* rites and rituals. **Buddha** also opposed caste system on account of the then prevailing oppressive and arrogant behavior of *Hindu* religious leaders towards other castes.

As *Sanskrit* was the language of the educated elite and religious terminology in *Sanskrit* was unintelligible to illiterate general public, **Buddha** taught and preached in the simple language of the common folk, which was then either *Prakrit* or *Pali*. The Buddhist literature is thus found in those languages, which are now extinct. In addition to many sutras their literature includes *Jataks*, which narrate tales of different previous lives of Buddha. In its *Surangama Sutra Shakya Muni* (another name of **Siddharath Gautam**) emphasized the methods of liberation from sufferings and for achievement of enlightenment, which is known as **Quan Yin** in *China* and other eastern countries.

In course of time, *Buddhism* split into two main branches i.e. *Mahayan* and *Hinyan* sects. The followers of *Mahayan* cult believe **Buddha** to be supreme entity but *Hinyan* accepted him as a great religious leader who showed a new path for liberation from human sufferings and for attainment of *Nirvana*. The temples of *Buddhism* called *Buddh Vihars* and *Pagodas* have statues of Buddha installed there in and he is worshipped and prayed for like Gods of *Hindus*. As the time passed a number of variants have developed and every country, where there are *Buddhists*, has its own variation – such as *Shento*, *Zen*, *Tendai*, *Nichiren*, *Soka Gakki*, *Lamaism* etc. Almost all of them belong to *Mahayan* school of thought. In *Tibet* it has been totally influenced by *Tantrik* rituals and can be classified as *Tantrik Buddhism*.

After a few centuries of its introduction *Buddhism* became state religion when **Ashoka** the Great converted to it. He sent *Buddhist* monks called *Bhikshuks* including his own son **Kunal** and daughter to all corners of the globe to preach and propagate *Buddhism*. Ashok proved to be real great promoter and motive force pushing hard the *Buddhist* learning, established *Buddhist Sanghs* or religious centers and monasteries, recruited *Bhikshuks*, created libraries of *Buddhist* literature, got its religious edicts caved on solid rock pillar, installing them at many places in his vast empire and adopted many other methods to spread it. Though both *Buddhism* and *Jainism* were contemporary and were running parallel being preached side by side, yet *Buddhism* overshadowed the latter having state patronage, being easy as well as simpler to follow, whereas *Jainism* ordained hard and rigorous ascetic practices like fasting, penance etc. Both *Mahayan* followers and *Jain* had statues installed in their temples and worshipped their idols.

The then world renowned Universities of *Buddhism* flourished as great temples of learning at places like *Tikshila* now in *Pakistan* called *Taxila*, *Nalanda*, *Patliputra*, the present *Patna*, *Shravasti* and *Sarnath* in *Bihar*, *Sanchi* in *Madhya Pradesh*, in *India* etc. *Buddhist* scholars like **Fahian**, **Heun Sang** from *China* and other Eastern countries used, to visit those universities to learn at the feet of *Buddhist* religious leaders and monks or *Bhikshuks* residing and teaching there.

At big *Buddhist Sanghs* or monasteries resided thousands of *Bhikshus* or monks practicing the tenets of religion leading practical pure life. As a mark of recognition of values imparted at these *Sanghs* and their importance, even now the initial prayer of *Buddhists* include:

"Buddham sharnam gachhami.
Dhamam (Dharmam) sharnam gachhami.
Sangham sharman gacchami."

It continued to be state religion during the reign of *Kanishka*, the great *Kushan King* whose empire sprawled from Orissa in India to *Sinkiang* province of China with its capital at *Pushpur*, the present *Peshawar* in Pakistan and covering whole of Pakistan and Afghanistan as well. He had held an international *Buddhist Conference* at *Jalandhar* in Punjab, India. The *Bhikshuks* of *Buddhism* in those days were pure, highly learned, celibate and of spiritual attainment. *Buddhism* was then at the pinnacle of its glory. It progressed, grew and flourished in India for more than a millennium.

To start with, females were prohibited to be ordained as *Nuns* or *Bhikshunis* and were not admitted in the order of monks. Later during the rule of **Ashoka** the restriction was relaxed to admit female monks and in due course of time the concept and practice of celibacy of the *Bhikshuk* system eroded and degeneration gradually and imperceptibly crept in, thus heralding the decline of *Buddhism* in India, though patronage of the state continued.

This degeneration and extra emphasis and stress laid on the importance of *Ahimsa* without consideration and regard for the practicalities of real life, left no place for pragmatism and moderation in day-to-day problem solving of hurdles met in life, the people began to be disenchanted. Other malpractices, internal bickerings and strifes of monks accelerated the rot which had set in and which substantially weakened the moral ethical authority of the monks and affected the religious fabric and morale of the society as a whole. It created alarm in the minds

of intellectuals and thinkers and people became restive desiring for a change and reform. It ushered in down fall of *Buddhism* after reigning supreme for nearly 1500 years. Ultimately in the beginning of the 9th century AD. **Adi Shankaracharya**, who lived from 788 to 820 AD., appeared on the scene, who through his intellectual religious discourses and contests with religious *Buddhist* leaders of the time, dethroned *Buddhism* and prevailed upon in the banishment of the religion of *Dharma* from India. The result was that *Vedic* religio was revived and restored to its original glory and status incorporating some useful tenets of *Buddhist* philosophy in it, though *Buddhist* shrines, *Stupas*, rock pillars with *Buddhist* edicts carved on them, were allowed to stand, *Stupas* such as at *Sanchi* near Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India embedding the bones of **Anand**, the Chief disciple of **Buddha**, the *Buddhist* Vihars at Sarnath and other places are a few examples. Rulers and Kings were welcome to its fold making, *Hinduism* again being a state religion. In India most of the *Buddhists* live in *Ladakh*. Only a few million Indians now profess *Buddhism* in India. But even now most of the inhabitants of countries like *Burma*, *Bhutan*, *Thailand*, *Cambodia*, *Laos*, *Vietnam*, *China*, *Sri Lanka*, *Philippines*, *Japan*, *Korea* etc. are *Buddhist*. It had reached as far as *Outer Mongolia*. It is now spreading in *Europe* and *U.S.A.* as well in all its variations. There is magnificent Pagoda of *Tantrik Buddhism* of *Tibet* as well as temples of other *Buddhist* cults in *California*. Counting the number of followers of *Buddhism* it is still one of the major religions of the world and is expanding though not with that vigor and vitality as in times of **Ashoka** and **Kanishka**.



21

NAURATRI AND VIJAY DASMI/DUSSEHRA

*N*auratri and Vijay Dasmi/Dussehra Utsav are celebrated by Hindu Community throughout India and abroad. It is one of the four major festivals observed from very ancient times. This ten days festival starts annually on the 1st day (after Amavas) of the month of *Asaun*, the seventh month of Hindu Lunar year, and the function lasts upto *Vijay Dasmi* or *Dussehra* the 10th day of the same month.

The festival and ceremonies vary in practice from one region of the country to the other; in *Bengal* it is called *Durga Puja*, where all nine days Goddess **Durga** is worshipped, but in south for first eight days Goddess Durga is worshipped, and on the ninth day Goddess **Saraswati** is adorned and propitiated. However in most parts of India it is primarily Goddess Durga that is worshipped.

In *Bengal* the forms worshipped are of **Durga** and **Kali**. The festival is observed as a state holiday for about a fortnight

more or less. Whereas in other states the holidays vary from one to three days. The word Durga is derived from *Sanskrit* word *Durg* (दुर्ग) meaning fort or a place of protection, thereby implying that **Durga** protects like a fort against attacks, onslaughts and intrusions by evil forces or enemies.

Every *Hindu* knows the rituals and rites performed during the period. Ordinarily during Nauratri fast is daily kept for nine or eight days and vows are taken ensuring discipline in life and worldly matters for better conduct and behavior. The *Varat* provided and prescribed for *Nauratri* really means taking vows as indicated. The devotion and adoration of Goddess or Goddesses is done by performance of rituals and rites like installation of figures and idols of Goddess is done by performance of rituals and rites like installation of figures and idols of Goddess, garlanding, offering fruits sweets and flowers, singing hymns in her praise, *Aarti* etc. of the deity during the daytime and after breaking fast in the evening with light food and finally submerging the figurine or idol in a body of water after nine days, which is called *Visarjan* Ceremony. Nevertheless *Nauratri* has one distinct feature in terms of worship of the Goddess. All other functions, rites and rituals are the same for worshipping any other God or Goddess except that fasting is done daily. The only other exception in *Janam Asthami* celebration of **Bhagwan Krishna**.

Therefore without dwelling upon the detailed explanation of every rite and ritual observed and performance of the ceremonies, it seems better to discuss from a different angle its various aspects. The origin, source, necessity and real meaning and spiritual connotations and significance of the celebrations are proposed to be dealt with.

Since human recognized and appreciated the role and power of natural forces and elements like light, fire, air, water and earth in their day-to-day life, the worship of mother nature or female aspect of the Creator of Universe was adopted for deriving benefits and to avoid their destructive effect.

So no time limit can possibly be fixed about its origin, God in Kinetic and Dynamic form is called Nature or *Prakirti, Maya, Shakti* etc. The Supreme Creator being formless and invisible to human eye can not be fully and completely comprehended by persons of average intellect. Every one knows that in order to describe verbally and understand anything one can only enumerate its qualities, characteristics, attributes and functions. Only the experience of a thing allows full grasp and understanding of that. Same technique was applied to know and understand the Creator. The foremost quality or function of *Brahm* or God is creation. The visible Creation i.e, the existence of innumerable universes, countless galaxies, stars and planets is the earliest and the very first conception of its Creator. The manifestation of Creator's powers in the form of five distinct energies i.e. sound, light, heat, electricity and magnetism translated or transformed into five gross elements of the material universe in which we live viz. *Akash, Air, Fire, Water and Soil*. There is no equivalent of Sanskrit word *Akash* in English, which can convey a complete and total import of the word.

Hence humans started to worship and invoke blessings of Mother Nature as a first step, which can help in realizing its source or Creator. Further our *Rishis, Sages* and *Thinkers* came to the conclusion that to lead a successful and happy life one must have physical, economic and intellectual cum spiritual

power. These are the powers which govern the full gamut of activities of humans in the attainment of material as well as spiritual benefits and advantages. The Creator too has three prime functions or attributes viz. creation, sustenance including regulation and administration plus its ending, dissolution or merger. The power of creation is symbolized by God **Brahma**, the sustenance and nurturing faculty is characterized by God **Vishnu** and merging or dissolution entity is called **Mahesh, Mahadev, Chander Shekhar, Rudra, Bhutnath, Ganga Dhar, Shankar** and also **Shiv** etc., though the last name **Shiv** is misnomer to describe only this function of the Creator. The force or power vested in these primary energies, which may be classified as subsidiary energies have been designated as **Saraswati, Laxmi** and **Durga** respectively. Thus three major Goddesses were visualized and assigned or considered to be having attributes of intellectual cum spiritual, economic and physical powers, which are very essential to live in this world, though *Hindus* of various regions, hues and colors worship many forms of Goddesses. Being integral parts of trinity of main *Hindu* Gods they have been appropriately described as consorts of **Brahma, Vishnu** and **Mahesh** respectively.

First of all everybody needs physical strength or power of the body which is basic and fundamental to other powers i.e. economic and intellectual needed for fulfillment of life's dreams. Thus the role of physical power is first priority. Hence the necessity or requirement of worshipping Goddess **Durga** in the first instance. After acquiring physical strength or power one needs to have economic power for the maintenance and sustenance of the physical strength of the body with out which one can not exist. The worship of second power is also thus very essential i.e, Goddess **Lakshmi**.

Overwhelmingly vast majority of humans are concerned with the acquisition of these two powers-Physical and Economic only. The people who strive for third power i.e, intellectual are fewer and form lean minority. The seekers of spiritual power, which is sublimity of intellectual power are even lesser. Consequently worshippers of Goddess **Durga** and **Lakshmi** constitute a very large and vast majority and far out number the followers or worshippers of Saraswati. However, it should not be inferred that the followers of Saraswati do not propitiate and adorn Goddesses Durga and Lakshmi. They too do without which they also can not exist. You therefore, find lesser numbers in pursuit of intellectual and spiritual activities.

It can safely and correctly be surmised that very human being on earth worships these three Goddesses. It is a different matter if many do not acknowledge it, but for all practical purposes who can deny their indulgence in it, though do not concede it so openly and candidly as *Hindus* admit of doing it in the forms symbolized and sanctified by *Hinduism*. After all what does worship really mean. In actual matter of fact it means and implies constant and continuous thinking and contemplation along with pursuit and desire to acquire, obtain or achieve a certain prowess, capability, object or a person.

Our *Sages* and *Saints* had also realized that eat, drink and be merry is not the only purpose of human birth on this planet, though they constitute the most important prior ingredients of a life. They determined that it is for a higher purpose and goal that souls are born as humans. It is to make progress in advancement towards self/God realization for which one has to fulfill certain duties and adopt some definite procedures and methods. *Hinduism* is fundamentally based on monotheism believing in one sole supreme being. As it happens that natural

tendencies of mind vastly differ from person to person and their degree of intellectual level and intelligent perception and comprehension also vary largely. In order to cater to such large populace and to direct them towards the higher cherished goal of God awareness they devised polytheism as a first step to achieve that goal. With view to satisfy diversified likes, tastes and learning towards particular faculties and qualities of the Lord they created a pantheon of Gods and Goddesses to suit their natural inclinations and instincts. To give them concrete forms for worship the Sages visualized the shapes and figures of different deities according to their supposed functions. It naturally resulted into Idol worship and *Murti Puja* because none can visualize the formless Supreme Creator for purposes of concentration and meditation to start with. The Supreme Creator is eternal, unchanging and perfect wisdom(Gyan) whereas according to *Hindu* belief all Gods and Goddesses merge in Him at the time of *Maha Pralaya* or Great Dissolution.

Thus appeared three major systems of worship for the neophytes in *Hindu* religion. These are now universally recognized as *Vashnavism*, *Shaivism* and *Sakatism*. In the Vaishnavism system, God **Vishnu** the sustaining and nurturing power of the Creator is the main deity to be worshipped. The followers of *Shaivism* regard **Mahadev/Mahesh/Shiv** as their main object of worship. The third system called *Sakatism* is based on the main worship of Mother Nature in the different forms of Goddesses. Out of so many of these Goddesses three stand distinct and are more popularly idolized and worshipped viz. **Durga/Kali**, **Lakshmi/Shree** and **Saraswati**, which are the three aspects of *Divine Mother/Shakti*. During *Nauratri* literally meaning nine nights these three Goddesses are ordained to

be propitiated and invoked. The religious observances, varats and traditional worship connected therewith are also reminder of past events narrated in different *Purans* apart from actual worship of the devine *Shakti*. Spiritual angle of the past events in the *Purans* are just allegories.

For *first three days Durga*, *next set of three days Lakshmi* and *final three days Saraswati* were originally desired and required to be worshipped on account of their spiritual importance and significance. They reveal practical sublime truths. In its spiritual and cosmic aspect it simply reflects three stages of individual evolution into goodhood showing and demarcating the course of spiritual discipline to grow into the image of the Divine which embodies highest perfection. The three steps towards attainment of the goal are composed of:

- (i) Cleansing or purification of the self by getting rid of negative tendencies, properties and traits
- (ii) Acquiring positive virtues replacing the negative attributes purged during purification and
- (iii) Obtaining Divine knowledge or wisdom (Gyan) after becoming pure and armed with positive qualities.

In the first cleansing one requires firm resolution, determined effort backed by strong will and desire for intense sustained struggle to fight out our shortcomings and weaknesses. In other word it necessitates the existence of power, strength and force for the planned struggle. To obtain such strength Goddesses **Durga** or **Kali** which embodies power and is considered destroyer and annihilator of evil forces is to be adorned and worshipped for the first three days of Nauratri. **Mahadev** or **Mahesh** having been determined as the destroying faculty of

*the Creator, the Goddesses **Durga** has been assigned the role of his consort epitomizing his power (*Shakti*) of destruction of our baser inclinations, vices and defects.*

Having accomplished the task of conquering impure propensities the stage is set to imbibe and cultivate virtues, positive attitudes and actions to attune oneself to divine qualities. For that objective one has to gather, accumulate and assimilate the immense spiritual wealth and also develop all auspicious qualities to become deserving and fitting receptacle of divine knowledge and wisdom. The Goddess **Lakshmi** is considered and accepted to be granter of all types of wealth of both material and spiritual nature. The latter in the form of purity and virtues called **Devi Sampati**. So 4th to 6th days of *Nauratri* were intended to be set apart for the worship of Goddess Lakshmi to implant the positive values and qualities in place of evil ones removed by the devotion and propitiation of Goddess **Durga**.

The qualities and virtues imparted by **Lakshmi** make one *Adhikari* i.e. deserving to receive light of Supreme Wisdom. He has become fit to be bestowed Divine knowledge. At that stage one is fully prepared for devout worship of Goddess **Saraswati**.

The word **Saraswati** is made up of two *Sanskrit* words *Sar* and *Swa*. *Sar* means *substance or essence* and *Swa* means *one's own self implying by that knowledge of self or realization of self is the essence or real substance or purpose of life on earth*. Goddess Saraswati symbolizes personification of divine knowledge and embodiment of *Brahm Gyan*. The sound of celestial *Veena* awakens the soul with notes of sublime divine music. She bestows the knowledge of *Nad* or *Shabd* encouraging the devotee to practice *Shabd Yog* for realization of eternal

truth. This has to be practiced in the last three days of Nauratri by worshipping Goddess **Saraswati** as she is depicted to be depository of all types of knowledge and wisdom both of spirit and matter including science, arts, performing arts and all types of education and learning and other creative activities. However, in actual practice masses worship only Goddess **Durga** throughout all the nine days, which has obliterated and hidden the overall purpose and full purport of *Nauratri* celebration.

People have become totally adhered to and consumed by the exterior or external ceremonies, rites, rituals, traditions and customs only ignoring the real purpose or objective which is the inner practice of Shabd yog through concentration and meditation on one's own *Isht* or deity of choice.

Our *Saints* could foresee the degeneration and obliteration of the real purpose and object of the nine days of devotion and worship. To keep us on track and to continuously remind us of the goal and right course they had introduced the *Aarti* of the deity with a burning lamp and blaring conch Shell (शंख) as well as the tolling of the bells in the daily worship. But unfortunately that also became limited and restricted to a routine rite or ritual in our worship whether at home or in the temple. It is not certain that even the priests and religious people can explain the true meaning, significance, import and implication of those rituals viz. *Aarti*, blaring of Conch and ringing of bell.

When a person has attained a certain state of deep concentration and meditation called *Samadhi* after continued practice, he internally sees a light or *Jyoti* like that of a flame of burning lamp and simultaneously can also hear the internal sound of a conch shell and bell. Lord is *Jyoti Swarup*. He is all light. He is self effulgent light of the Universe. Whole of the visible and

invisible universes were created by sound and the only visible form of God is all Expansive light. The lamp lighted in temple also reminds that each of us is part of that Supreme Jyoti or light. Both science and religion declare from the housetop that light is the source of substance of all living beings. To merge in that divine light is the goal of spirituality and highest purpose of life. Seeing of light and hearing of sound of conch shells and bells is a definite sign of considerable spiritual achievement and growth. It was not in vain and only for enjoyment of outer or external music that these rituals were made integral part of daily worship. It was to remind us of our spiritual goal every time we go before the Lord whether in temple or at home.

The idolatory prescribed in *Hindu* religion is to encourage and attract general public towards God the Creator. It was and is meant for beginners and neo-initiates just as a child is provided with educational toy, pictures and drawings of alphabets, slate and pencil etc. as aids towards education. *Murti* is also very essential for the purposes of concentration and meditation in the beginning. They are simple symbols to fix the mind in spiritual education it is not the wherewithal and end all of such practice of *Dhyana Yog*. One has to leave behind such aids in order to advance further. *Hinduism* leads the aspirant gradually from external material images to internal mental images and from there to one personal God and then on to the Impersonal, Absolute or Transcendental Brahm beyond *Sargun* and *Nirgun* aspects of it. For spiritual and religious advancement and growth one should and has to adopt internal meditation.



22

DEEPAVLI OR DIVALI

*A*s the word *Divali* or *Deepavli* indicates it is a Hindu Festival of Light. There are four major festivals of Hindus observed throughout the world. These are *Raksha Bandhan* or *Rakhi*, *Dussehra* or *Vijay Dasmi*, *Divali* and *Holi*. *Ram Navmi*, *Janam Ashtmi*, *Durga Ashtmi*, *Mahavir Jayanti*, *Buddh Purnima* etc. are commemorations of births of Avatars, Gods and Goddesses and spiritual leaders of Hindu community. These are not observed by every Hindu but are celebrated by different sections or *Sampradayas* of Hindus, whereas four above major festivals are celebrated by almost all Hindus.

Due to *Satogun*, *Rajogun* and *Tamogun* in every human being, each of us has the streaks of *Brahmin*, *Kashtriya*, *Vaish* and *Shudra* tendencies in different proportions varying from person to person. These festivals have been based on those four characteristics, qualities, traits or tendencies found in all human beings. First the urge to learn and teach is the main attribute of humans and is considered to be a *Brahmin* instinct. The festival of *Raksha Bandhan* depicts it. Second quality is to protect or defend oneself, kith and kin, society, community and country. The festival of *Dussehra* exemplifies that quality

attributed or assigned to *Kshatri*. The third human characteristic is to maintain, sustain and lead a comfortable life. This can be done through earning one's livelihood which in other words means acquiring money or *Dhan* or *Lakshmi*. To earn is vaish quality or trait of humans allover the world. *Divali* festival is a living example of it. After successfully performing the above three duties one wants to enjoy life. The gay abandonment on the day of *Holi* festival illustrates it in full measure. Forgetting every thing else but to be merry and pleasure seeking is a typical basic instinct. The universal desire for pleasure and leisure envelopes all types of humans and is thus celebrated on *Holi* day by all regardless of caste, community, high, low, sex and age. At present we are concerned only with *Divali*. The significance and importance of only this festival is to be highlighted. The significance of Holi has already been presented in the month of March. Others will be taken up later.

The significance of *Divali* is economical, social as well as religious cum spiritual.

- It marks the harvesting of summer crops like rice, sugarcane, oilseeds, cotton,etc. which provides means to live comfortably during the ensuing winter.
- It heralds the beginning of new financial year. Traders, artisans, farmers and business people after taking stock of profit and loss during the past financial year close old accounts books and open new ones.
- It observes the return of **Bhagwan Rama** to Ayudhya after conquering **Ravana**.
- **Vardhman Mahavir** the last and 24th *Tir Thankar* of Jains left for his heavenly abode on *Divali Day*.
- **Swami Dayanand Saraswati** the founder of *Arya Samaj* also merged with the Eternal on this Day.

- The last but not the least importance is that it reminds us about the origin and the end state of all humans. All Creation started with Light, we are born of light and our destination is also the Supreme Light. It points to the fact that all types of darkness and ignorance can be removed only by light and knowledge; may it be material or spiritual. One of our Upanishad says;

“Tamso ma Jyotirmay”

“तमङ्गो मा ज्योतिर्मय”

Thus praying to the Supreme to bless with His light to remove our darkness of all sorts.

Though the main festivities are held on one day only i.e. *Kartik Amavash* of *Hindu* lunar calendar, but it starts two days earlier and lasts for two days after *Amavash*. Thus it is actually spread over five days beginning with *Dhan Tirodashi* i.e. thirteenth day of *Karlik* month and ending on the 17th day of that month i.e. *Dooj Tithi* of *Shukal Paksh* of *Kartik*.

On *Dhan Tirodashi* houses, shops buildings etc. are cleaned, white washed and repainted. Even the drains are cleaned and an earthen lamp is lighted and placed there too. The ritual is called *Mori Deva*. On that day people purchase new utensils, clothes and other house hold goods from the markets where shop keepers display their wares.

Next day is *Nark Chaturdashi* or *Chaudash*. It commemorates the killing of **Rakshas Narkasur** by the Divine Forces. It is also the birth day of **Hanuman Ji**. *Hindus* worship and present offerings to Hanuman. It is also known as *Chhoti Divali*.

On Divali day proper Goddess **Lakshmi** is worshipped by offering sweets, fruit, money etc. and earthen lamps or candles are

lighted. Each individual house is illuminated both inside and outside with lights. These days electric lights are also made use of for illumination. Hindus pray for wealth and prosperity in the coming year and throughout.

As a matter of fact every human being in this world right from a child to an old person worships the Goddess of **Lakshmi**. The only difference is that Non-Hindus also do it, but do not admit it; whereas *Hindus* openly worship Lakshmi and admit it. The question arises how it can be proved without the fear of contradiction that Non-Hindus also worship Goddess Lakshmi. To understand it one should understand what is worship. Take the case when a male human loves a female. Love is a form of worship and vice-versa. One is said to worship his or her beloved when she or he is there always in his or her thoughts day and night, awake or dreaming. Similarly every human being on this earth always remains occupied with the thought of earning or amassing wealth except when one is in sound sleep or engaged and absorbed in worship of God Almighty. If it is not worship, then what is it? How would one characterize this ever actual existing state of mind of a person. People, who deny it that they do not worship Goddess LAKSHMI, are nothing but hypocrites. Real worship is done from heart and no ritual is essential. An idol or a sketch drawn or a picture/photo of figure and form of Lakshmi are only aids to worship; but real Lakshmi is material wealth of all kinds, which every body aspires for.

On next day of *Divali* is *Ann Kut* [अन्न कृट] or *Goverdhan Puja*. On this day **Bhagwan Krishna** protected people of *Braj Bhumi* from the wrath of **God Indra** in the form of thunderstorm and torrential unprecedented rain by lifting mount **Goverdhan** and herding the people under it. On this day

alms and charity are given and free kitchens are run for the hungry and homeless. This day skilled people like carpenters, all types of smiths, masons and other artisans etc. celebrate as Lord *Vishwakarma Day* and worship him in their own particular way to grant them the skills and proficiency in their respective professions. They trace their origin to him. **Vishwakarma** is considered the God and the grantor of all types of artisan skills.

The fifth and the last day is known as *Yam Dutiya* [यम दुत्या] or *Bhayya Dooj*. It is written in our *Puranas* that on this day *Dharam Raj* or *Yam Raj*—the God of Death—visited the house of his younger sister **Yamuna** and dined with her. She tied a *Rakhi* around the wrist of her brother and prayed for his eternal life and immortality. In *Hindu* households, where tradition is still followed, sisters pray for the longevity of their brothers and give offerings to *Dharam Raj* or *Yam Raj*.

According to *Padam* and *Bhavishya Puranas*, *Kayasthas* are descendants of Lord **Chitra Gupt**, who was the last son of **Brahma Ji** and was assigned the duties of keeping the record of good and bad *Karmas* of human beings thus assisting and advising **Dharam Raj** in the dispensation and administration of justice by rewards and punishments for those *Karmas*, thereby awarding *Narak* or hell and *Swarg* or heaven as the case may be to each soul. Lord Chitra Gupt is worshipped by *Kayasthas* on this day.

Hence *Divali* is the best and most celebrated of all of the *Hindu* festivals. It may be added in the same context that **Bhagwan Vishnu** is revered as a sustainer and protector of this world and **Lakshmi** or wealth is the best and most useful vehicle to achieve this object. So our Rishis and Sages visualizing the importance and significance of Lakshmi declared her as

spouse or consort of Bhagwan Vishnu. Who could be better suited for this role than Lakshmi. For similar appropriate reasons a wife is titled as *Grih Lakshmi* in *Hinduism* and that belief needs to be strengthened for the well being and harmony in individual household. That status of her has to be respected, maintained and sustained.

Before ending this a note of caution and warning is required to be sounded. In recent few hundred years a wrong, unjustified and misplaced notion has crept in *Hindu* concept of Divali. It has been widely accepted as a part of *Divali* celebrations that one must gamble on that night to be prosperous in the ensuing year. Are all Non-Hindus, who do not gamble on that night, not prosperous. It is utter nonsense and ridiculous perception and a concept devoid of all logic and sensible reason. Have people forgotten the lesson of *Mahabharata*, when **Pandavs** and **Kauravas** gambled at large scale, wherein **Yudhishter** lost all his kingdom, his brothers and even his wife **Daurapadi**, who were put at stake. That sole event is responsible for the *Mahayudh* of *Mahabharata* resulting in wide destruction and loss of millions of lives including one hundred sons of **Dhritrashtra** himself, the ruler of *Hastinapur* kingdom, as well as disappearance of *Hindu* science and technology along with deterioration in *Hindu* civilization and culture of that time. It must have taken centuries to salvage pieces of all that and resuscitate what was left as aftermath of that tragedy and holocaust.

This practice of gambling is a wrong, misconceived and destructive tradition and is extremely urgently required to be absolutely discarded as fast as possible.



23

VEGETARIANISM

Vegetarianism is of two types. One is the category of people who do not eat anything except vegetables, fruits, nuts and grains including their roots, flowers, stem, seeds and leaves comprising plant food. They do not even take milk or dairy products, the source of which is animal kingdom. Such people form a fraction of vegetarians as a whole. One such outstanding variety of persons was Saint Kabir of India (1398-1517 AD). He usually consumed *Khichri* (खिचड़ी) a cooked mixture of rice and lentil (pulse or Dal). He lived for 119 years and was reared and brought up by his adopted parents who were Muslims. There is another class of vegetarians who shun, meat, eggs, fowl, other poultry products and fish, but do drink milk and take other dairy products provided they are not allergic to milk and its derivatives. They are called lacto-vegetarians. More than 99% of the vegetarians are of this type. Some have become vegetarians by force of circumstances such as disease requiring vegetarian diet to ward off their escalation and to control their maleffects. Some are lacto-vegetarians because of their religious faith and spiritual considerations. There is no doubt that vegetarians are less prone to the diseases of the heart,

liver, lungs, digestive tract and cancer etc. with a rider that they are simultaneously non-smokers, do not chew tobacco, and abstain from alcohol, drugs and narcotics etc.

According to reports in nineteen seventies by two anthropologists **Adrienne Zihlman** and **Nancy Tauner** published in Time Magazine issue of March 1999: “*Among surviving hunting peoples calories -upto 70% -come from plant food patiently gathered by women, not meat heroically captured by men*”. Further the evidence of Stone Age consumption of plant food has mounted since then. In 1994 Paleobotanist **Sarah Mason** concluded that variety of plant material discovered at Paleobotanist sites in Czech republic indicated that humans ate edible roots and seeds. It is generally and widely believed that Stone Age and earlier humans survived by hunting and eating only non-vegetarian diet. The recent discoveries quoted above do not support this view.

So called non-vegetarians also consume lot of milk, vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and dairy products. They are in practice pseudo-non-vegetarians. In that sense the percentage of total non-vegetarians may be even less than some percentage of so classified as non-vegetarians. The every essential range of minerals, salts, carbohydrates, vitamins etc. are indispensable for human health and all are not provided by meat, egg or fish etc. compelling non-vegetarians to take assistance of vegetables, fruits, milk, nuts. non-vegetarian items provide mostly proteins generally of one type, where as different types of protein are available in different types of grains, pulses, beans and milk. Eggs are considered best diet next to milk contains only about 13% proteins. In comparison the protein content of equivalent quantity of pulses is more than 24%, milk provides

38%, Soya beans 43% and pea nuts about 31 %. The protein portion in the other nuts varies.

Thus it is not necessary and essential to eat non-vegetarian items to obtain required amount of proteins, while one can not have normal health without vegetarian items, because essential ingredients are not alternatively present in non-vegetarian eatables. Non-vegetarians are dependent on vegetarian food for maintenance of normal health but vegetarians are free of such dependence on non-vegetarian food being self sufficient. It amply demonstrates the superiority of vegetarian diet, so far as complete nutrition is concerned. Milk has been proven to be the most complete and perfect diet. The eggs are classified as next best nutritious food but lacks in carbohydrates, calcium, vitamin B complex and some other minerals. Recent research has shown that eggs are not easily digested notably by infants, toddlers and young children because of their tender digestive system. **Dr. E B Emary** of USA and **Dr. Inha** of England have suggested that eggs are low intensity toxins for humans. The eggs can cause allergic cough and cold, bronchitis, asthma and eczema. The brain disease named *Creutzfeld Jacob's* disease has its source in eggs. The egg white contains lot of albumin by weight percentage, which if taken in excessive quantity becomes cause of Avidin poison having injurious effect on health with the possibility of triggering paralysis, skin inflammation, eczema and in extreme cases even leprosy. The discoveries of **Prof. Egenberg** of Germany have indicated that eggs produce 52% of phlegm and create disturbance in nutrition equilibrium of the body. The incidence of listeriosis is also related to eggs. **Dr. Goldstein** and **Dr. Brown** both *Nobel laureates* of USA recommend a diet without eggs and meat to lead a comparative disease free life. Eggs may be second best

diet next to milk but it carries with it the deficiency in nutrition and being source of several diseases is much less beneficial and less healthy diet than compared to milk.

The human beings wash their own clothes if our fertility secretion or fluids stain them. Is it not ridiculous and unwise to gladly eat such semi-solidified fluids (Eggs) of birds and fowls; being victims of our own taste buds while relishing these otherwise untouchable secretions.

The habit of eating flesharial foods is nothing but the slavery of our taste developed over the centuries. It is a fact that cooked meat and more so uncooked one will lack flavor if it is devoid of spices, fat, vegetables and nuts etc as in itself meat will not be so tasty. Where as vegetarian foods have their own peculiar and special individual flavor, sweetness, sourness etc. liked even by the palate of an infant having no experience in taste. It points out to natural choice of humans. By eating non-vegetarian food we are introducing additional diseases of cattle, fowl, fish in our bodies that are caused by germs like *Salmonella*, *E.coli*, mad cow disease and other bacteria which are usually fatal. According to *Unani* (Greek) system of medicine brought by *Muslim* invaders of India and is even now being taught in specific medical colleges of that branch of treatment and cure followed by its practice recognized by the government of India; the cattle meat particularly beef and pork invariably causes arthritis and later gout. Further all non-vegetarian food is devoid of dietary fiber which is so essential to prevent the diseases of the digestive system such as chronic constipation, small and large intestinal cancer, piles, colitis, lcer, gall bladder stone and consequent liver failure.

Every body is aware that quality of diet has profound effect on one's body functions and health but they limit this recognition only to bodily effect. They fail to fully realize that it has implications effecting mental faculties and human behavior. They forget that the same blood that circulates in the body and keeps it going also flows to the brain to run its functions which controls human behavior and habits. It is common knowledge that extra-alcohol, small quantities of LSD and other drugs causes hallucination, mood changes, behavior aberrations in a normal person under the influence of their intoxication. If such small quantities of such articles and medicines too, acting on our brain greatly influence our mental faculties, straight thinking and upright behavior causing distortions and deviations from normal functioning, how can one possibly assert that continual use of certain types of foods and eatables for longer duration would not have effect on our brain, its discriminating power and efficiency. In order to avoid and forestall such undesirable influences one should choose and select one's diet carefully. The Saints have summarized it thus to convey over all impact and import of food on our mind.

“जक्षा खण्डो भ्रन्न पक्षा हे जयए मन।”

Every article on this earth has all the five basic constituents generally called elements for ordinary conception and comprehension viz. *Akash, Air, Fire/Heat, Water and Soil/Earth*. On the basis of preponderance and dominance of one or more of these elements in their composition all the articles and living beings on earth have been divided into four broad categories or classes. They are:

- *Khani* (खनिज) or minerals obtained mainly from mines.

These have two dominant and active elements of soil and water while the rest of the three are dormant and passive. These remain fixed at their places and are not self-mobile.

- *Vansaj* (वसज) or vegetation including trees, plants, bushes, shrubs, grasses, weeds etc. The vegetation has soil, water and air as active and equally predominant elements playing important role in their life cycle and other two are comparatively passive and less influential. These remain fixed at their places and are not self-mobile.
- *Andaj* (अंडज) originating from eggs. This has the four elements of soil, water, air and heat equally dominant and active in their development and the fifth element of Akash is relatively passive and ineffective. These are self-mobile.
- *Jeraj* (जरज) meaning born after full development in the womb and with placenta. This has all the five elements of Soil, Water, Heat, Air and Akash equally active and in equilibrium and in balance as a whole. They are mobile, active and somewhat intelligent and have all the five characteristics of *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *some ego* too. These are self-mobile.

The humans though belonging to *Jeraj* class have *Akash* element in far more abundance than other living beings. That makes humans full of all the mental, intellectual and spiritual faculties. Hence man is considered the top and highest species.

Under the current price system one pays the price, for the damage, destruction or theft of any of the four categories,

increasing proportionally with the number of active elements constituting their formation. For killing a man penalty is death. For lesser crimes towards humans the punishment is still higher than in case of other living beings. So the underling principle is to promote and encourage least damage to society, environment and least disturbance of ecological system. Nature too wants to have balanced ecology and maintains the principle of proportional punishment. The law of *Karmas* work in the similar manner. The load of our bad *Karmas* is greater with the progressive increase in quantum of damage done. We are born, exist and die in vast unfathomable and immeasurable ocean of life surrounding us. As everything in the world is having some form of life, every living being has to prey on life and eat it for its own self-preservation and survival. As such there is no escape from destroying life in some form when essential to satisfy hunger. Because of this natural law, the punishment or load of bad *Karmas* for satisfying hunger is negligible. Again the principle is to do the least harm and destruction to avoid higher load of bad *Karmas*. See the carnivorous predators too obey this law. They prey and hunt only when they are hungry and kill only when absolutely essential. It is only the human being, who kills not just for self-sustenance but also destroys trillions of life for the sake of pleasure, profit and greed. Fishing and game hunting are just the past time for pleasure. Millions of tons of animal meat, billions of slaughtered fowls, fish and other water creatures are lying stored in the warehouses to earn profit. This is sheer exploitation, destruction of balance in Eco-system and limitless greed which is not justified in the eyes of God and Nature. The retribution of Nature comes to us in various forms, demonstrating its displeasure as non-acceptance of our inconsiderate actions.

At cattle raising ranches cows and pigs are reared simply for manufacture of meat. Same is the case with fish and fowl hatcheries. According to one information chart exhibited in the *Aquarium* at the *Golden Gate National Park* in San Francisco, California, USA it was prominently displayed in 1985 that it takes ten times the daily intake of food by a human being to feed and nourish a cow or a pig. It further showed that only one tenth by weight of the total weight of a cow or pig slaughtered can be recoverable as meat; the rest being bones, hide, skin, viscera, water, solid waste and other components which are not utilized as food for humans. Thus to raise and rear animals for meat it takes equivalent of vegetation and plants consumed by one hundred humans. If meat is not the end product hundred persons can be fed by that quantity of primary food produced in the field. Thus it can be prominent factor of considerable and substantial importance to reduce the expected world food shortage if rearing and killing of animals only to provide meat is not perpetrated. Already human world population is around six billion and is anticipated to touch eight billion in not very distant future. By stopping the raising of animals for procurement of meat only the damage to Eco-system shall proportionally decrease and curtail extra load on vegetation and environment. Nature knows how to maintain balance in Eco-system, if man ceases to interfere with it.

No living being including humans enjoys death and are rather afraid of it. All animals—birds, fowl, fish and other creatures are not only fearful of death but also feel pain and agony at that time. They try to run away and escape it when sensing the approach of premature death before slaughter. The pain and suffering adversely effects the quality of meat making it detrimental to the health of its eater, because under fear undesirable

chemicals are released in their blood stream altering its normal quality. These chemicals remain in the altered quality of meat thus obtained and have effect on both physical and mental state of the consumer. Is it not a paradox and perplexing that while all the time we wish and pray for the safety and well being of our children we feel pleasure and delight in killing innocent offsprings of other creatures for no fault of theirs and who have done no harm to us, just to satisfy our palate and unjustified greed.

The animal kingdom can be divided into three main classes on the basis of their food habits. Those are carnivorous, herbivorous and omnivorous. The exclusive and purely carnivorous species have special jaw structure as well as digestive system. They have spaces in between their teeth and have many longer and strong incisors than other two species. The longer teeth help them to bite chunks of raw flesh and the space in between does not allow it to stick around. Their digestive system is also simple and shorter and thus different from rest of the two species. The jaw structure of herbivorous species including humans differs from those of carnivorous one. There is no space between their teeth and are closely fitted. They have broad-topped molars which assist them to chew and grind food properly. Their digestive system is not so simple and is somewhat complex. The omnivorous variety has jaw structure and teeth similar to the herbivorous species but has longer and quite complex digestive tract and system. The provision of such a digestive tract by nature ensures that in emergency situations and in odd environment when they can not find vegetarian diet for their survival and have to per force of circumstances eat meat etc; their digestion may adjust to eat. Thus nature created humans primarily herbivorous.

In *Hindu* religion it is called *Aaptkala Qama*- i.e. *the principle of living under extra-ordinary conditions*. The exceptional circumstances, special times and peculiar conditions obtaining at a place dictate abnormal diet, not ordinarily a must, for human sustenance and survival. But we humans have routinely adopted omnivorous diet rather than an exception and as concession for to face peculiar conditions of a certain place and time.

There were times in human existence on earth when mankind lived in wild or caves, did not know the technique of farming, Milch animal breeding, horticulture and house building and vegetarian food could not be available in plenty and abundance all the year round due to variation in seasons and vagaries of climate and weather, that non-vegetarian diet had to be resorted to. The habit once formed of eating non-vegetarian diet continued over a period of many centuries and still persists as a hereditary factory though as a matter of fact there appears to be no necessity now. In different regions of the world like *Deserts, Arctic, Tundra, Siberia, Rain scarce areas* and zones which remain covered by

considerable snow over very long periods, the availability and procurement of vegetarian items could not be ensured for all the people at all times of the year. As such habitants of those regions had to adapt their dietary habits conforming to those of omnivorous class. Due to difficult terrain and geographical and transport handicaps the export and transit system could not have full play in the distribution of vegetarian articles from one place to another.

Now with the advent of rapid transit systems, abundance of and plentiful extra food in farming areas of the world, introduction of new technologies, existence of world wide export and

procurement facilities and development of global economic trade and commerce, there seems to be little justification to continue the omnivorous dietary habit of people, particularly when vegetarian diet has a number of advantages relating to health, mental alertness, reduction in world food shortage, more balanced Eco-system, environmental improvement and elimination of cruelty, torture and pain to innocent animals, birds etc including their young ones.

Take a look at overall picture of animal kingdom and scheme of things there in. None of the carnivorous species hardly performs any useful service to civilized society. They of course maintain a semblance of balance in Eco-system between carnivorous and herbivorous species as predators by hunting the latter one. In contrast the herbivorous animals provide useful and important services to humanity on domestication, without which our civilized society may falter. Even then they are the targets of slaughter and killing as a source of food for non-vegetarians. This is how ingrate humans reward their services whereas nobody ever eats a carnivorous one. Only some canine and felines like dogs and cats can be domesticated of which dogs do admirable service to humans, whereas felines provide entertainment in circuses, when trained and as exhibits in zoos. The domesticated dogs and cats have become omnivorous in the company of man, The vegetarianism even of herbivorous animals is beneficial to our lives.

Some may point out job loss and unemployment in meat processing industry, cattle breeding and connected services as a negative factor if vegetarianism is adopted by all. With ever increasing new technologies, research and development and expansion of agriculture, horticulture and other related sectors on

account of resulting greater consumer demand for more vegetables, milk dairy products, fruits, grains, nuts, herbs etc. by larger population of both vegetarians and non vegetarians the reduction of jobs and unemployment shall be more than compensated. Such fears are not realistically threatening or of consequence.

However in certain regions of earth and for special purposes the practice of omnivorous diet may have to be continued to face and put up with local geographical, climatic and environmental hazards. We can not afford to have cent per cent vegetarians in this world which is full of conflicts between different nations all the time. There have to be certain exception to it. For example members of the armed services; which have to fight in defense of their country in various climates and geographical conditions of deserts having very high temperatures and snow clad mountains dipping to below zero temperatures, on high seas and submarines below oceans in different regions confronting difficult, harsh and severe conditions of climate and environment; have to be kept accustomed to non-vegetarian diet so as not to be at disadvantage in such situations till they are in service. On retirement they can be educated about vegetarian diet and be encouraged to revert to it. But most of the countries in the world where sufficient expanse of land is available and accessible for cultivation, agriculture and horticulture along with dairy farming lacto-vegetarianism can be advocated, promoted and practiced. Then why to waste world resources on non-vegetarian food and eatables. Such countries can easily produce abundant and large quantities of vegetarian food not only for local consumption but also for export.

The trend towards lacto-vegetarianism is gradually in progress though slow due to vested interests, which are entrenched in commerce and industry and trade pertaining to non-vegetarian diet. There is an *International Association of Vegetarians* having branches in nearly one hundred countries. Recently in March 1999 an annual conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand which was attended by delegates from more than forty countries of the world.

Together with a consortium of *health organizations* the *American Institute of Cancer Research* strongly urged the government to put vegetables, fruits and other plant based food in forefront of the newest version of the US Dietary guidelines for Americans to be released in the year 2000 AD. Five top organizations viz. *American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, American Dietetic Association, American Academy of Pediatrics* and *National Institute of Health* have joined forces to suggest that 55% or more of daily calories should come from complex carbohydrates such as grains, fruits and vegetables. If milk is added it shall be 75% or more of diet leaving only 25% non-vegetarian component.

The program requires more vigorous efforts for its promotion and advertisement to make it more popular. It is extremely difficult to suppress and give up centuries old hereditary diet habits. It requires intellectual, moral and political will of mankind to assert in order to make it success in the long run to reap its manifold benefits. The ages old developed taste and preference for flesharian foods is very hard to eschew and abstain from. The progress may be slow but the goal is achievable.

The advantages and superiority of vegetarian diet is well established in many respects. Vegetarianism is not only good

for disease free health but as also beneficial for mental faculties and functions, better behavior in civilized society and spiritual uplift too. The vegetarians are more or less more tolerant, temperamentally stabler, less agitated and calmer.



24

ARE KAYASTHAS BRAHMININS-A CRITICAL STUDY

*T*he answer is yes. The following would prove the point as collaborated by facts, history, practice and other factors provide cogent reasons for the above answer.

Caste System

The system of classes as devised for distribution of work and labour depending on allocation of different duties and functions to specific stratas of society for the protection of life, liberty, honor and moral as well as spiritual values of an organized and civilized human society and its people, the smooth running of which ensured happiness, peaceful living and progress of its members. The system was secular, fair and without prejudice of any sort.

Since the dawn of the civilization and consequent organized

human society on earth there have always been four classes of people allover the world and shall continue to be so. These are:

- Intellectual cum spiritual consisting of teachers, professors, researchers, scientists, thinkers, philosophers, poets, artists and religious leaders.
- Protectors of life, property, freedom and fundamental human rights and moral values comprising of armed forces, police and other security personnel, lawyers, prosecutors, law makers, governments and their functionaries.
- Nation builders and sustainers of economy. It includes engineers, doctors, architects, traders, entreprenruers, bankers, farmers, including farm holders, shop keepers and other business workers.
- Servicing class. It incorporates farm labour, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths and smiths of all kinds, weavers, actors, entertainers, engravers, cooks, washerman, cobblers, drivers, hide and skin handlers, and other unskilled workers who may provide manual assistance.

In each class there are helpers and assistants who are also classified in main class of each type. In each of four main classes there exist four such groups or sub classes of specialists.

- Persons who do only intellectual type of work.
- Who actually engage in execution or perform applied work.
- Maintenance or sustaining group or institution

- Who help and assist in the execution as well as maintenance functions.

For example take the case of medical profession. There are *professors, teachers and researchers in medical colleges and schools*, who do pure intellectual work. Second are physician and surgeons who indulge in actual practice on the basis of knowledge gathered, drugs and procedures perfected by first category. Third are the *paramedics, nurses, compounders, operation theater assistants, labouratory technicians, pharmacists* etc. Fourth are lower level staff of different types like *warders, dressers, labouratory attendants, cleaners, washerman, peons, orderlies* and other maintenance workers. In reality all four classes are intermingled and are present in each of main classes or communities.

In India **Adi Manu** designated four main classes as *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaish and Shudras*, which due to adoption of the same profession or avocation by successive generations of the same class came to be defined as castes. The word caste does not exist anywhere except India. The mobility from one class, which was later termed as caste, was unrestricted depending on the profession or occupation adopted by an individual ie it depended on *Karam* or *Karma*. When the system was securely in place, a time came when rigidity entered in it due to vested interests, who based it on birth for their selfish ends. It is human weakness and nature to create secure economic and social environment for himself as well as his generations. As *Brahmins* then exercised influence and power to control the destinies of other classes, they adopted a strategy in pursuit of those twin objectives by inducting birth as basis of caste and discontinued or stopped the classification of people by profession as basis and deemed birth to be the sole criterion for

a person's caste. Thus the movement of one class/caste to another was abolished and abandoned. The rigidity based on birth was nothing but degeneration of society and Hindu thought as propagated by *Manu*. This obliterated the real purpose, aim and object of organized society created in old days. This produced tensions and strains and prejudices. People wrongly began to consider themselves as superiors and better on account of accident of birth in a particular community. It also gave inferiority complex to others, who with passage of centuries accepted it compulsively as fate or their destiny on earth by the will of God. Thus merit as well as real manening. As a consequence the society as a whole got weakend and ready to bear sufferings for centuries to come in the form of foreign invasions and rule amounting to slavery for all intents and purposes. Had the *Kayastha* community not cooperated with *Foreign* and *Muslim* rulers, *Hindus* would never have arisen from the quagmire and morass of misfortune. The *Kayasthas* helped in salvaging substantially from total doom, which was looming on the horizons of future.

Genealogy and Origin of Kayathas, History and Practice

To properly understand the truth and logic that *Kayasthas* are *Brahmins* one must go to their origin in *Padam* and *Bhavishya Purans*. According to those **Mata Irawati (Shobhawati)**, one wife of **Shri Chitra Gupt Maharaj** was daughter of **Rishi Susharama** or the son of **Brahma ji** himself. As the name indicates **Shivsharma** was a *Brahmin*. Second wife of **Shri Chitra Gupta Maharaj** was **Mata Dakshina/Sudakshina** alias **Nandini** was daughter of **Adi Manu**, who gave *Hindu* law which included different *Asharams* of life, distribution and

classification of people in different classes; later called castes; along with their duties and functions called *Dharma* of each community, general jurisprudence, social laws and defined moral and ethical values. **Manu** was son of **Surya Bhagwan** which is the sole cause of life and its sustenance on earth. Manu of course was *Brahmin*, which no body can deny. Thus both wives of **Shri Chitra Gupt** were *Brahmin* on account of their birth as the prevalent basis of caste. Shri Chitra Gupt was created/appeared out of whole body of **Brahma ji** as obvious from the word *Kayastha*. The Brahmins are said to have been created out of head of Brahmaji ie only one portion, may be the best part of the body were thus incomplete and not perfect. On the other hand Shri Chitra Gupta Kayastha having been created appeared out of whole body was obviously perfect and complete in itself. Brahmins only represent intellectual and spiritual quality of Brahma ji, whereas Kayastha being descendants of Shri Chitra Gupt represent all the qualities of Brahma ji head and heart including intellectual and spiritual, physical strength, business and trade prowess as well as quality of practical service to mankind. The union and combination of Shri Chitra Gupt possessor of all those qualities and **Matas Shobhawati** and **Nandini** could have and actually have produced offsprings with better qualities than Brahmins. In a way Kayasthas are superior to Brahmins. But for the sake of classification in one of the four categories/castes, they are at least Brahmins, in view of their superior nature and qualities, for all practical purposes. Thus Kayasthas are Superior humans. More over in ancient times all over the world it was matriarchal system of society and not a patriarchal system as existing now. On this basis too, the wives of Shri Chitra Gupt being Brahmin, their sons and descendants are also Brahmins.

Many *Kayasthas* even now write and profess *Kashyap* as their *Gotra*, which is *Gotra of Brahmins*. *Kashyap Gotra* is very well known and is considered one of the superior *Gotras* of *Brahmins*. Then we have *Gaur* (गौर) as one of the twelve branches of *Kayastha*. Lot of *Brahmins* in *Punjab*, *Haryana*, *U.P.*, *Madhya Pradesh* and other states carry *Gaur* as one of their important *Gotras*. *Shrivats* is also one of the *Gotras* of *Brahmins* which is nothing but *Shrivastavs* of *Kayasthas*.

In *Maharashtra* there are *brahmins* who are known as *Nagars*. Similarly in *Gujarat* and *Kashmir* there are plenty of *Bhat Brahmins*. In *Bengal Bhat* plus *Acharya* (*Bhatacharyas*) are *Brahmins*. *Bhatnagars* are a combination of both, thus pure *Brahmins*. After conversion to *Islam* some *Kashmiri Brahmins* began to call and write themselves as *Butt* which is distortion of *Bhat*, but still many continue to write *Bhat* inspite of their muslim names. The author of “*Raj Tringani*”, **Ban Bhat** was a *Kashmiri Brahmin*, who wrote history of *Kashmir* in his book. Again **Arya Bhat** the *Father of Indian Astronomy* was a *Brahmin*. In *Jammu* region, *Mathurs* living there declare themselves as *Brahmins* when inquired into and questioned.

Moreover, our customs and established religious ceremonies and procedures of different *Sanskars* such as *Mundan*, *Kanchhedan*, *Marriage* etc. are as those of *Brahmins*. At the time of the *Kanchhedan* ceremony boys are ordained to start wearing *Janew* which is a must among *Brahmins* also.

According to *Bhatnagar Vivah Vidhan*, published in Urdu in the end of ninetieth century, which I happened to read in my teenage years, it specifies four essential types of functionaries during marriage ceremony. Those are *Prohit*, *Karam Karta*, *Ashrita* and *Nai* (who describe themselves as *Kulin Brahmins*)

each of which had some specific delineated duty to perform in marriage. Brahmins had also similar arrangements which may be prevalent even now in *Brahmins*.

Varan (वर्ण) and its Significance

The word *Varan* (वर्ण) has several meanings, The primary one is colour or complexion. Other meanings are nature, attributes, characteristics, tendencies, aptitude etc, which differentiates one person, group or community from the other. No caste has been ever assigned to a particular colour or complexion. Hence other qualities mentioned define Varan of a person or community.

Let me clarify it further, Even now while casting horoscope at the time of birth of a new born the astrologers mention different *Varan* for different children born to the same parents, not to speak of same family or same community. It is not fixed and necessary that a child born in Brahmin family must be given Brahmin as his or her *Varan*, It can be *Kshatri*, *Vaish* or *Shudra* also. Same is the case with other castes. In horoscopes *Varan* is allocated according to the position of *Planets* and *Nakshetras* at the time of birth. It is irrespective of caste one is born in, If you have horoscopes for your family members, it can be easily confirmed. It is a combination of all characteristics mentioned in foregoing and indicates over all attitudes towards life when it is laid down that a particular person or community belongs to a particular *Varan*. It has no relevance to caste as generally misunderstood.

Because **Shri Chitra Gupt** was assigned the duties of assisting **Dharam Raj/Yamraj** in administration of all his functions, which mainly belong to and expected to be executed

by *Kshatri*, the *Varan Kshatri* appears to have been designated for him. Since his descendants in successive generations from the very beginning have been doing same types of jobs such as to govern and aid as well as assist in governing institutions like police, military, civil services, which are part of protection of life, property, freedom etc. the duties assigned to *Kshatris* by **Manu**, it was only logical and proper to give *Kayasthas Kshatri Varan*. It, however, does not and can not be construed to mean that *Kayasthas* cease to belong to *Brahmin* community as per their origin.

To give concrete examples from our scriptures and history take the case of some famous personalities from *Mahabharata*. **Dronacharya**, **Kripacharya** and **Ashothama** were all great warriors (Maharathis) fought valiantly and performed duties of *Kshatriyas* throughout life, but were still considered *Brahmins* because of their birth in *Brahmin* families. **Maharishi Vyas** author of *Mahabharata* was son of **Rishi Prashar** a *Brahmin*. He fathered three sons **Dhiritrashtra**, **Pandav**, and **Vidur**. Being son of *Brahmin* father all three should have been classified as *Brahmin*. On the contrary both **Dhiritrashtra** and **Pandav** as well as their descendants were considered *Kshatri* being members of governing family/dynasty. Vidur was prime minister of **Dhiritrashtra**, thus a *Kshatriya* by profession and avocation but was designated as *Shudra* though he was one of the sons of Vyas because he was born to a slave maid, who happens to be classified as *Shudra*. This clearly illustrates that *Varan* and caste in which one is born are two quite distinct things. It proves the point the tone can be of *Kshatri* but can still be counted as member of *Brahmin* caste. Same is true and appropriate for all the *Kayasthas* to be classified as *Brahmins* despite being designated as *Kshatri Varan* on account of their duties

and occupation. Hence it is a misnomer to equate varan with caste as a thumb rule which is not factual. The origin of *Kayasthas* entitles them to be part and parcel of Brahmin community at large.

As a matter of fact every human being manifests the qualities of four *Varnas* while performing daily duties of life. It is the preponderance of his various attributes, functions, duties and code of conduct, described as his *Dharma* in a particular community, are the factors which however help in deciding his *Varan*.

Colateral Evidence

Even now all the four castes, *Brahmin*, *Kshatri*, *Vaish* and so called *Shudras* are serving in the armed forces, police and various departments of government and civil administrations and still retain their original caste. Then why only the *Kayasthas* should be treated differently in this regard. By performing the duties of *Kshatris* as allocated and allotted to *Kayasthas* for all practical purposes and thereby assignment to *Kshatri Varan*, they can not be deprived of their *Brahmin* origin. *Kshatris* allover *Punjab*, *Haryana*, *U.P.*, *Bihar*, *M.P.* etc are by and large is a trading community in present India and should therefore be considered as *Vaish* by *Varan*. But reality is that they are called and deemed *Kshatris* by virtue of their origin of birth in *Kshatri* family. It does not imply that they have forfeited their caste origin on account of adoption of other means of earning of livelihood. On the same analogy the *Kayasthas* are *Brahmins*. Official capacity and status are not synonymous with ones roots in caste system as prevalent now.

In *Bihar*, both *Kayasthas* and *Bhoomiyar* have *Sinha* ie *Singh* in Sanskrit and Hindi, as their last name generally. To

clump both these together and to consider all *Sinhas* as *Bhoomiyar Brahmins* would be nothing but travesty of facts and reality. **Lord Sinha**, who was given the title of Lord, made a member of House of Lords in London and appointed as Governor of Orrisa was a *Kayasth* and not a *Bhoomiyar*. Similarly **Sri Krishna Sinha** the first Chief Minister of Bihar in independent India was a *Kayastha*. *Rai* or *Roy* as pronounced and written in Bengali language was a hereditary title given to *Kayasthas* throughout India by Muslim rulers and not a caste or *Varan*. **Bidhan Chander Roy** the first Chief Minister of Bengal in Independent India as well as **Raja Ram Mohan Roy**, a ruler in his own right were *Kayastha*. **Bal Thakre** the head of *Shiv Sena* is a *Kayastha*. **Suresh Mehta** the Ex-Chief Minister in Gujrat is also a *Kayastha*. Generally *Mehtas* are *Khatri* or *Aroras* in Punjab or Haryana and of *Vaish* community in Gujarat. To categorize **Suresh Mehta** as one of the above on basis of last name as *Mehta* would be a joke and ridiculous thing to do. **Dr. N. B. Khare** the first Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh after independence of India was a *Kayastha*. *Khare* being a Gotra of *Saksenas*. **Dr. Sampurananda** the second Chief Minister of U.P. after Independence was a *Kayastha* and **Dr. Shiv Charan Mathur** was Chief Minister of Rajasthan. Therefore to classify anyone of them as *Kshatri*, *Vaish* or *Shudra* without reference to origin of *Kayasthas* would not be correct. So to define *Kaysathas* as *Kshatri* for that matter belonging to any other caste without going into their *Brahmin* origin simply on basis of existing and prevalent notion of *Varan* would be neither proper or correct nor authentic. Many *Brahmins* deal in hides and skin, shoes business even menial jobs they take. But still they remain *Brahmin* and are not categorized as *Shudras*.

What is Shudra

The root of word *Shudra* lies in Sanskrit word *Kshudra*, which means small or little. It does not imply inferior, lower or menial, as it began to be connoted, and accepted as something inferior or lower in later dark times, when religious heads and intellectual guides themselves became victims of shortsightedness, shallow intellect and lower intelligence coupled with self preserving interests. Those religious heads were thus devoid of correct and proper thinking, had lack of vision and clear insight of important issues of those times. In their zeal and enthusiasm to establish themselves and their community of *Brahmins* as something supreme and superior to other castes, they created a system of gradation on the basis of caste by birth and declared the rest of three classes something inferior to *Brahmins*. In that system of gradation the so called *Shudras* were placed at the bottom wrung of the ladder, because their work was localized and therefore, had impact restricted to small or little area of influence in *Hindu* society as a whole. The individual work of a person placed in *Shudra* class had very small long term effect if any. Still the tasks assigned to *Shudras* were not only very important but also were essential for the well being of society. Is human body capable of whole some existence and fully competent to perform all the functions necessary for living without legs. The answer is evidently a big NO. Similarly can an organized system or society exist, if this service class of people stop performing their duties and work. What will the rest of nation do without them?

Thus this class of people i.e. *Shudras* are neither inferior, nor lower, nor irrelevant and unimportant but are most essential part of our society. How can one look down most essential part

of our society. How can one look down upon them with contempt and jaundiced eye of hatred.

It is incomprehensible, unthinkable and beyond even imagination that a person of such an extra intelligence, sagacity and superior wisdom like **Rishi Manu** could have derided and deprecated such an important and essential class of human society by declaring them inferior or lower. It was in later dark times of foreign rule, when such an important limb of society was degraded not only to sub human but sub animal status for all intents and purposes. Thus in a perfect scheme of things as propounded by Manu no class/caste is superior or inferior. All the four classes/castes are equally important and share equal dignity and respect in the performance of duties by each of them. As foreign rulers wanted to impose their supremacy, they created an environment and atmosphere in which the dignity of labour lost its useful meaning and significance. In such circumstances the *Brahmins*, who were scrambling for their supremacy and superciliousness, appropriated and arrogated for themselves the sole right to learn Hindu scriptures, interpret them, duties of priesthood in temples and other religious institutions and preside over all religious ceremonies of *Hindus*. They depicted themselves as highest representative of religion and thus only and primary intermediary between man and God in all the *Sanskars* enjoined on *Hindus* right from birth to even after death(in shape of *Sharadh*). They became sole arbitrator of fate of *Hindus*.

It was just a device to maintain strangle-hold and control on the lives of *Hindus* for all times to come thereby ensuring livelihood, economic security, higher social status and superiority for their generations and descendants. It was their narrow

mindedness, myopic vision and selfishness at best and had very little to do with the well being and interests of Hindu society at large. A person born to a *Brahmin* parents could exercise those rights and privileges even without proper qualifications but a Non-Brahmin was debarred.

Even now no Non-Brahmin can become a priest in a temple and preside over any *Hindu* religious ceremony, however pure, spiritual and scholar of scriptures one may be. Only a *Brahmin* can be ordained as a **Shankaracharya** of five religious *Maths* established in all corners of India. A case in point is of **Mahesh Yogi** propagator of *Transcendental Meditation* and of international fame, Who could not be appointed **Shankracharya** of *Joshi Math*, simply because he happens to be a *Kayastha*, though he was more than qualified on other grounds. Under such circumstances operating in the past it is no wonder that *Kayasthas* as a community might have been decreed as Non-Brahmins or even *Shudras* in certain parts of India.

Having come in close contact with *Muslims* in the course of their official duties the *Kayasthas* at some point of time had adopted non-vegetarian diet. To my mind it can be a reason to treat *Kayasthas* as Non-Brahmins by religious heads of those time, who were strictly vegetarian and had power and authority to excommunicate any person, or groups of persons or a community. The *Brahmins* were then so powerful that nothing will be authentic and certified in *Hindus* without their participation and ruling.

As regards litigation to decree *Kayasthas* as *Shudras* nothing can be emphatically said without knowing the details of individual cases like motive, purpose, background, context, arguments deduced, results/decisions expected, desired or

arrived at. It might be for reasons to gain economic and social advantage, or to obtain preference for entering and promotion in higher echelons of administration of those times.

On the basis of such few and far between cases the details of which are unknown, it will be height of stupidity and foolishness to consider and treat all *Kayasthas* as *Shudras*, particularly when such a wise and intelligent community has produced *President of India*, *Prime Minister of India*, *Chief Ministers of States*, *Parliament members*, *Governors*, *Ministers*, *Legislators*, *High court and other court justices and judges*, *secretaries to Governments*, *generals in armed forces*, *Heads of paramilitary and police organizations*, *great scientists*, *political leaders and revolutionaries*, *doctors*, *engineers*, *poets*, *actors*, *other high dignitaries and officers in countless numbers during foreign rule as well as modern times*, even *Saints and religious leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, founder of Brahmo Samaj. Swami Vivekananda founder of Rama Krishna Mission, Rai Sahib Saligram and Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal both of Radha Soami faith, Ram Chander Sakseña founder of Sahaj yog Marg, Mahesh Yogi founder of Transcendental Meditation Yog, Aurobindu Ghosh and many others not quite so known.*

An ancestor of late **Dr. H. M. Lal**, *Ex-President of All India Upkark Fund* was **Shri Madan Gopal Bhatnagar** of *Sikanderabad*, U.P. He was poet with surname *Tufta* [तुफ्ता]. He was a contemporary and friend of **Mirza Ghalib**, a poet of international fame. *Tufta* was given title of *Mirza* by the King **Bahadur Shah Zafar**. He was known and called as **Mirza Tufta** by circle of his friends, admirers and acquaintances. If on the basis of his then current name *Mirza*, some person would try to exploit that he was a *Muslim* and not *Kayastha*, it would be

utterly unacceptable and challengeable. Similarly to brand *Kayasthas* as *Shudras* due to their nearness and being in good books of *Muslim* and other foreign rulers forming a prominent part of their administration would be improper, unethical, unjustified and immoral. Brandishing such a thing does not obscure the fact that *Kayasthas* are *Brahmins* by virtue of their origin.

Epilogue

Having said all the above, when science and technology has advanced so much in modern times and the world is about to enter twenty first century, it is sheer folly to close our eyes to reality and consider Shudras as something inferior and lower to others and demean an important class of human beings. God has created all people as equal. which is preached, appreciated and extolled in recognition of this important fact by saints and sages of yore and modem. Can **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**, the framer of present Indian constitution be considered as inferior to any other Indian or foreigner on account of his birth in a schedule caste family.

It is predicted in *Bhagwat Puran* that in *Kalyug* every body will become *Shankar Varan* [शंकर वर्ण], which in other words actually means that humanity would progress towards classless society or casteless humanity, which is now quite apparent from the worldwide trends in this direction. In due course the class/caste would disappear and be abolished; as class/caste have begun to lose their relevance on account of faster and better communications reducing the world to a Global Village by force of circumstances.

Saints have proclaimed: this is the universal truth and it was the sole purpose of appearance/creation of **Shri Chitra Gupt**

and his descendants on earth to administer justice, solely and entirely on the basis of deeds and actions.

Another Saint said, “*Kayasthas are those, who believe in good deeds and actions and practice it*”. There are inexorable signs and indications on the horizon that in future what will count would be in deeds and not caste.



PROFILE OF AUTHOR

Sh. Brij Bhushan Lal Bhatnagar

Born: 21 Feb., 1917

Expired: 01 Jan., 2001

Shri Brij Bhushan Lal Bhatnagar was a scion of a respected *Bhatnagar* family. He was born in *Panipat* (Haryana) on *February 21st, 1917*. He was the son of **Late Dr. Brij Mohan Lal Bhatnagar** and grandson of **Sh. Bishambar Dass** of *Panipat* (Haryana). His mother *Smt. Chanderwati*, daughter of **Late Sh. Har Sarup Singh** of *Sonepat*, was very religious, charitable and spiritual.

He was an intellectual giant, with a keen mind. He *matriculated* at the very young age of 14 from *Jain High School, Panipat* (Haryana) and did F.Sc. from *Rohtak* (Haryana). At the age of 16 he went to *Lahore* (now in Pakistan) for higher studies. He was one of the very few people, who had the distinction of completing his post graduate in late nineteen thirties, when there were only few colleges right from *Delhi* to *Peshawar* (Pakistan) and higher education was not so common. He received his B.Sc. (Hons.) from *Forment Christian College* in 1935 and M.Sc. (Hons.) in 1937 (at the age of 20).

He joined Punjab Irrigation Department in Lahore as a Research Scientist and moved to Amritsar after partition.

He was recognized as a leading Scientist in his field and rapidly rose to the rank of Class I Gazetted officer. He retired from the Irrigation Deptt. as a Superintending Engineer in 1975.

On October 15th 1945 he married **Smt. Bimla Bhatnagar** of *Lahore*. She was a life long *Educationist* rising from a *High School Teacher* to retire as the *District Education Officer* from *Punjab*. She was born in June 1923 at *Rohtak*, Haryana to Late **Smt. Lashmi Devi**, daughter of **Late Sh. Durga Parshad** retired *Tehsildar* and **Late Sh. Mukat Behari Lal** son of **Late Sh. Bal Mukand**, Assistant to a *British Bar-at-Law* at *Lahore*, Pakistan. Her mother was religious, mild mannered and pious lady. Her father was an Officer in the *Punjab Civil Secretariat, Lahore*. She was the fourth child of a forward and progressive family of seven siblings.

Shri Brij Bhushan Lal Bhatnagar was a benevolent and generous person. He shared his good fortune with anyone in need. Throughout his life he donated towards multiple charitable causes, supported children from poor families. Also, from a young age he took over the responsibility of supporting his family and relatives as needed. Early in his life he was drawn towards spirituality, he was initiated into the *Radhaswami* faith by His Holiness, **Maharaj Sawan Singhji** of Beas. Later in his life he was graced by **Param Dayal, Pt. Faqir Chandji Maharaj** of *Manavta Mandir, Hoshiarpur* (Punjab). Throughout his life he practiced the teachings of *Santmat*. He was an avid reader with a sharp mind, who wrote numerous articles and was well versed in the various religions of the world (and was often referred to as “*Encyclopedia of knowledge*”). He enjoyed discussions on various subjects. He was liberal minded and progressive in his views.

Shri Brij Bhushan Lal Bhatnagar is survived by two sons who are both settled in USA. The elder **Sudhir Bhatnagar**, an *Electronic Engineer* is working as a Manager in a reputed Electronics Corporation of Sunnyvale, California. His wife **Kshama Bhatnagar** is a *Teacher*. They have two sons **Nikhil Bhatnagar** and **Vikas Bhatnagar**. The younger son, **Dr. Rahul Bhatnagar**, is employed as an *Associate Director* in a well established *Clinical Research and Development organization* in Austin, Texas. His wife **Vandana Bhatnagar** is M Sc. His sons are **Varun Bhatnagar** and **Mehul Bhatnagar**.

